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# Networks, malandros and social control: exploring the connections between inequality and violence in Venezuela

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**Networks, malandros and social control: exploring the connections between inequality and violence in Venezuela**

This thesis looks at the connections between inequality and violence in Venezuela by exploring how people's relationships might mediate or mitigate these connections. It is often assumed that people's relationships can provide motivations for engaging in violence, or that they provide informal social controls that can keep them from violence. Venezuela is an interesting case study because traditional indicators suggest violence might not be related to inequality in this context, justifying a focus on lower-level mechanisms that might be responsible for the often found correlations in different contexts. This thesis shows that historical inequalities provide the distal conditions for the institutionalisation of el malandreo, a Venezuelan gangster identity. Nevertheless, violence between malandros –people that identify with el malandreo– itself is the proximate cause of the deadly violence that holds Venezuela in a venomous grip.

The research is based on data collected during a year's fieldwork in the barrios, poorer areas of Venezuela's cities where the majority of violence occurs, of two different cities. I collected both qualitative observation and unstructured interview data, as well as more quantifiable personal network data that were analysed with E-net and SPSS. A large part of the thesis is also based on ethnographic observations as well as interviews with malandros.

The findings show that many barrio residents feel disadvantaged and may be motivated to use violence, nevertheless, there is little evidence that there is a lack of informal social control in these areas. Instead, the absence of formal authorities and dense interaction networks open the barrio up to much more ambiguous forms of informal social control. Such observations emphasise that el malandreo can be seen to provide existential meaning as well as informal social control, through violence. Overall, the thesis argues for a relational understanding of the connections between inequality and violence and for seeing violence itself as a form of social control particularly in areas where authority is ambiguous and social networks are dense.

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I dedicate this thesis to my mum, Steven and the memory of Omar Eduardo Martinez.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION; EXPLORING THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN INEQUALITY AND VIOLENCE IN VENEZUELA

### 1.1 Introduction

This thesis explores a much debated relationship between inequality and violence, with a case study of Venezuela, a country on the northern coast of South America. Traditional indicators of inequality and violence show a counterintuitive evolution in Venezuela, with a declining Gini coefficient going hand in hand with dramatically increasing homicide rates. This evolution contradicts an extensive body of research that has found positive correlations between these indicators. Nevertheless, theoretical explanations for these correlations do not suggest direct connections between inequality and violence. It is assumed people's interactions and relationships mediate and mitigate these connections. This thesis is aimed at a better understanding of these connections through an exploratory analysis of primary data on people's interactions and relationships collected during a year's fieldwork in Venezuela between May 2009 and December 2012.

This thesis shows that an understanding of these interactions, using qualitative and personal network data, offers a privileged view on the connections between inequality and violence. The homicidal violence that holds Venezuela in a venomous grip is a function of the historical absence of formal opportunities and formal social control agencies, coupled with dense interaction patterns in the *barrio*, where the majority of Venezuela's deadly violence occurs. These patterns have led to the institutionalisation of 'el malandreo', a gangster identity that provides young men with existential meaning and importantly but contradictorily, protection. Deadly violence between 'malandros', young men that assume the identity of el malandreo, spreads through fear and retaliation in dense interaction networks. This thesis argues that inequalities in access to opportunities, and, importantly, formal social control, have everything to do with the continued attractions of el malandreo, though little more with the violence it uses. This violence itself is the proximate cause of further violence, whereas historically grown inequalities provide the distal conditions in which this violence can take hold.

This chapter first positions the thesis within a growing awareness of the dramatic effects of homicidal violence in the development literature. It then evaluates some aggregate statistics on Venezuela, making the case for investigating in more detail the interactions and relationships

that might influence these aggregate statistics. It summarises the research questions and provides an outline of the thesis, taking in the contributions it makes to the literature.

## 1.2 Homicide in Development Studies

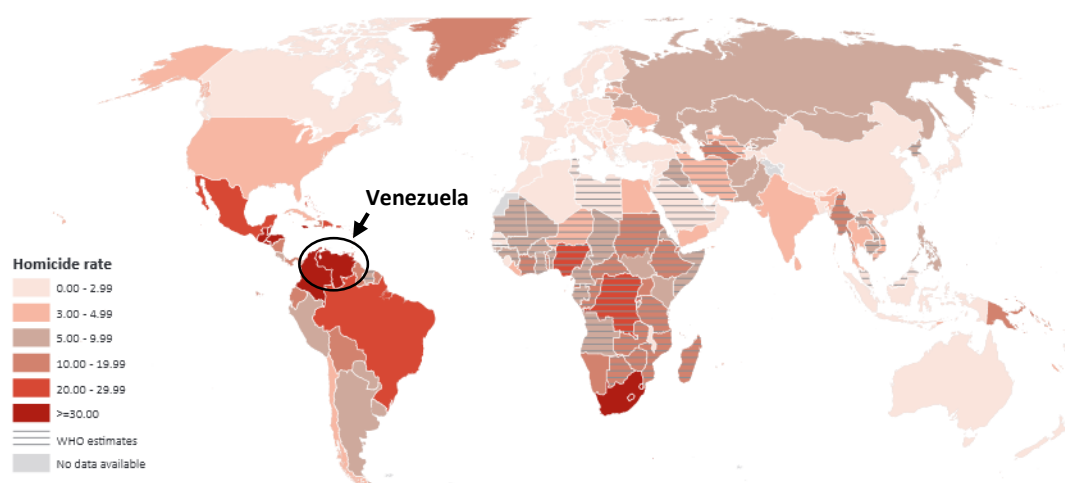
*Lower levels of violent crime are generally related to higher levels of development, as well as to lower levels of income inequality.*

*(UNODC, 2014) p. 78*

The interdisciplinary field of Development Studies aims to understand and explain vast disparities in indicators of development between the more developed countries of what has become known as the global North, and less developed countries of the global South. Where at its origins, development was conceptualised as material wealth and economic growth, it has come to encompass notions of human development, a much broader concept that looks at the lives people lead and the freedoms they enjoy as measures of development (Desai and Potter, 2002; Nafziger, 2006; Sen, 1999). In this vein, scholars have started looking at different aspects of well-being, over and beyond material well-being, including freedom from fear and security (Luckham, 2009; World Bank, 2011). Non-state, interpersonal violence, as reflected in intentional homicide rates, is increasingly seen as a development concern (Diprose, 2007; Moser and McIlwaine, 2006).

Figure 1-1 validates this concern. It shows elevated homicide rates are disproportionately concentrated in countries of the global South.

**Figure 1-1 Homicide rates by country or territory, 2012 or latest available year (UNODC, 2014)**



Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Dashed lines represent undetermined boundaries. The dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. The final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

The accompanying 'Global Study on Homicide' (UNODC, 2014) talks of the polarisation of homicide. It states that 'Intentional homicide caused the deaths of almost half a million people (437,000) across the world in 2012. More than a third of those (36 per cent) occurred in the Americas, 31 per cent in Africa and 28 per cent in Asia, while Europe (5 per cent) and Oceania (0.3 per cent) accounted for the lowest shares of homicide at the regional level' (p.11). Fox and Hoelscher (2012) state 'that annual deaths due to homicides worldwide outnumber those due to organized armed conflict by a factor of roughly 3 to 1', but that the question of why some countries are more prone to this type of violence than others has 'received little attention from conflict and development specialists in recent years' (p.431).

Studies that have paid attention to these regional and cross-national differences frequently see inequality as an important, if not most important<sup>1</sup>, contributory factor to elevated homicide rates (Heinemann and Verner, 2006; UNODC, 2014; WHO, 2002; World Bank, 2011). Nevertheless, the mechanisms by which inequality contributes to these homicide rates are not as clear as often assumed, as I will explore in detail in Chapter 2. Further, the vast majority of research that has investigated these connections in more detail and on lower levels of analysis has been done in the global North. The case of Venezuela casts doubts over these links. According to the homicide data visualised in Figure 1-1, it is now the second most violent country in the world (UNODC, 2014). It carries this gloomy reputation in spite of recent improvements in a number of development indicators, as the next section explores.

### **1.3 The Venezuelan paradox**

*Donde hay desigualdad hay violencia*  
*Where there is inequality, there is violence*  
 Hugo Chávez, cited in Zubillaga (2009, p.8)

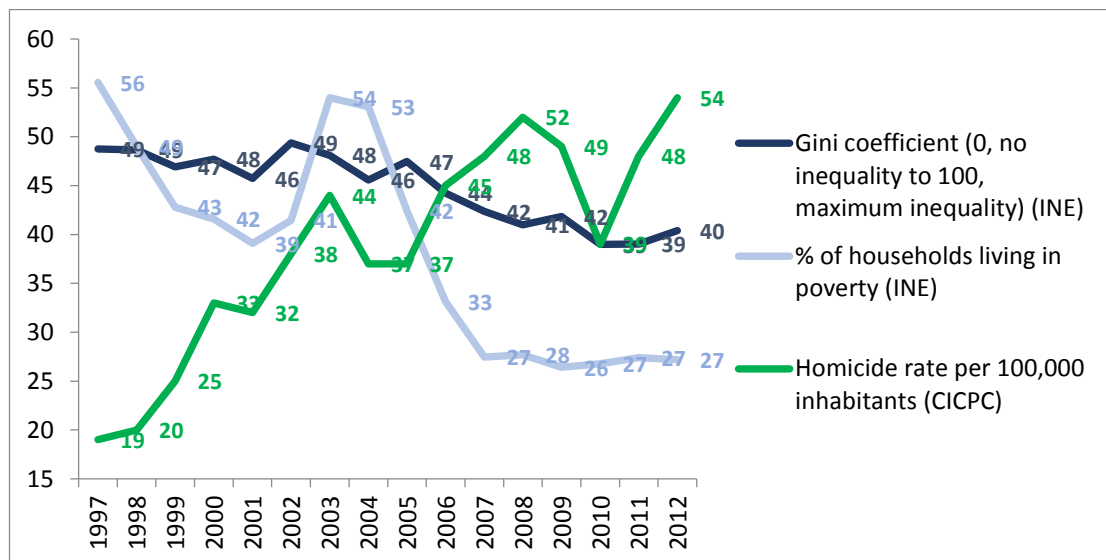
In contrast to its late president's words in the introductory quote, Venezuela is a poignant illustration of the complex relationship between inequality and violence. In terms of its income distribution, Venezuela is traditionally seen as one of the more egalitarian countries on a highly unequal continent (De Ferranti et al., 2003; ECLAC, 2011; Gasparini et al., 2009). This tradition gained impetus with the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998, against the background of detrimental effects of structural reform and adjustment that affected many poor and middle-class Latin

---

<sup>1</sup> The 'Spirit Level', an influential book by Wilkinson (2009) identifies inequality as the main cause of various social ills, including homicide, without critically evaluating the mechanisms or any evidence to the contrary, such as Venezuela. See also (Runciman, 2009)

Americans in the eighties and nineties. He was elected on a platform of poverty reduction and redistribution and soon started implementing progressive reform programmes (Ellner, 2010; Wilpert, 2011). These programmes had marked effects on a wide number of aggregate development indicators. A couple of these indicators are shown in Figure 1-2, contrasting them to an increasing homicide rate.

**Figure 1-2 Evolution of national Gini coefficient, household poverty and homicide rates 1997-2012**  
(Data source: INE, CICPC)



The percentage of households living in poverty decreased by half (51%) in the space of 15 years, from 57% in 1997 to 27% in 2012<sup>2</sup>(INE; PROVEA, 2012). Relative poverty, or income inequality, declined substantially too. The income Gini coefficient<sup>3</sup> decreased by almost a fifth (18%), from 0.49 in 1997 to 0.40 in 2012 (Gonzalez Plessmann, 2008; INE, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> These figures are based on (first semester) data from the National Statistics Office (INE)'s 6 monthly household survey, as reported on their website in 2014. These data are highly contested. Some question the validity of this poverty line measurement, based on the price of an essential foods basket, questioning whether these data represent real income changes. With high inflation and food subsidies, it is difficult to appreciate how real incomes have evolved. Further this survey is not designed to capture incomes as such (Bujanda and Torres, 2008). It is not very sensitive to capturing different types of income data, e.g. wages, mixed incomes (from e.g. informal employment) and transfers. Nevertheless, this is more an issue of degree than presence, almost all commentators do acknowledge a substantial reduction of absolute poverty during the Chávez government (España, 2009; Ponce, 2010, 2013; Riutort, 2009). More multidimensional, basic necessities poverty also shows an, albeit less dramatic, decline. Further, figure 1.2 shows this was not a steady decline, poverty went back up in 2002-2004 due to a national strike.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 2 p.32, a measure of inequality that calculates differences between each pair of observations. It ranges from 0, no differences, to 1, where 1 case has all resources. For Figure 1-2, I adjusted this by multiplying it by 100, to align it with the Y-axis scale. The Gini coefficient is also based on abovementioned INE survey with its limitations.



These trends would intuitively suggest violence should decline too. Chávez himself always assumed his reforms would have a direct effect on violence as indicated by the quote that introduced this chapter<sup>4</sup>. In sharp contrast, and under his presidency, aggregate homicide rates<sup>5</sup> increased by 184%; from 19 per 100,000 inhabitants before he was elected in 1997, to 54 in 2012. Based on this homicide rate, Venezuela is considered one of the most violent countries in the world today (Romero, 2010; Sanjuán, 2008; UNODC, 2014). In the decade between 2003 and 2012 alone, more than 126,000, predominantly young barrio men, lost their lives to homicidal violence, making an investigation of the determinants of this violence a timely concern.

In all, these data do not support a positive relationship between aggregate income inequality and homicidal violence. Many authors have used these data to refer to Venezuela as a paradox, suggesting Chávez' policies were misconstrued, have not benefited the poor, or that his policies undermined state institutions that can keep people from violence (Briceño-León et al., 2009; Sanjuán, 2008; Zubillaga, 2013). These suggestions are often based on a rational-actor view of violent offenders. In this view, people are seen to use violence because they lack the necessary controls or institutional guidance to keep them from violence, or because they lack the resources to materialise their goals through legitimate means. Violence is conceived as an intentional decision, based on a weighting of external motivations and internal controls.

Nevertheless, these authors often make two important attribution errors. First, they assume a rising homicide rate reflects more violent people. However, the homicide rate reflects deadly interactions, not violent people. As violence is inherently difficult to observe and measure, the homicide rate is the best available approximation of violent people within an abstract boundary, but it is not perfect (see Chapter 2 p. 16). From its homicide rate, it is clear that Venezuela has a disproportionate number of deadly interactions, but it is not clear whether more people are violent, or whether people's interactions are deadlier. It may well be that just a few people are responsible for a large number of homicides. Further, even in Venezuela, homicide is still relatively rare. On average, in 2012, there were 45 homicides a day on the national level, but

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<sup>4</sup> He is also famously quoted for suggesting it is understandable people steal if made to go hungry by neoliberal policy (Briceño-León, 2012a).

<sup>5</sup> Investigative police (CICPC) data, see Chapter 3 and (Sanjuan, 2008) for limitations. The Venezuelan Violence Observatory also publishes figures on homicide. See (Kronick, 2014) for a discussion on the questionable validity of these numbers.

even in the most violent barrios homicide is not a daily event, and even the most violent people are violent only a minority of their time (Collins, 2009).

Second, these commentators assume that a declining income Gini coefficient reflects that less people would be motivated to use violence. Nevertheless, the national Gini coefficient reflects income differences between all people in Venezuela. These income differences do not tell us anything about people's motivations. Theoretically, as we will see in chapter 2, these aggregate income differences are not seen to provide people with motivations directly. Instead, motivations are said to follow from a discrepancy between people's opportunities and expectations; if people's opportunities do not match their expectations, they may be motivated to use violence. Declining income differences may even generate more motivations, as people's expectations may have risen faster than their opportunities as Chapter 3 explores in more detail. Further, some perspectives suggest people's expectations are based on a reference group, they do not stem from comparison to everyone in their country. People may be even more motivated to use violence if people in their immediate surroundings have benefited from an aggregate decrease in income inequality whereas they have not.

Further, neither a declining Gini coefficient nor an increasing homicide rate reflect that people are less subject to social controls, formal and informal sanctions aimed at maintaining conformity to established norms and rules, that can keep them from behaving violently (see 2.2.2). Briceño-León (2012a) interprets the rising homicide rate as evidence that Chávez undermined Venezuela's institutions. He suggests that a social contract between state and citizens, which normally keeps people from being violent, collapsed. In a different article (2012b) he uses an aggregate measure of institutional performance (the World Governance Indicator) to show this better explains changing homicide rates than the Gini coefficient, supporting his argument of institutional decline. Nevertheless, this aggregate measure does not offer much insight into how individuals might be subject to (informal) social control mechanisms. Further, Chapter 3 shows homicide rates have not increased continuously, nor homogeneously, across the country, suggesting national policy is not necessarily a driver of these homicide rates. It also shows recent policies are often a continuation of clientelist politics more than a radical change in how people relate to the state. This thesis argues there has not necessarily been a sudden decline, rather there is a protracted absence of state institutions, dating from well before Chávez. In terms of people's relationships in particular, little may have changed.

Moreover, these interpretations ignore a more relational understanding of violence that does not see violence as an attribute of people, but of their interactions. In these perspectives violence itself is social control (Black, 1983). People do not use violence because they lack (informal) social controls or material means, but because the structure of their relationships is more conducive to confrontational conflict. These perspectives look at how inequality is reflected in the structure of people's relationships; where people are confined to dense networks and have little access to formal authorities for conflict resolution, violent resolution becomes more likely. Violence itself can thus be seen as a form of social control.

In light of these observations, the question of whether and how inequality relates to violence in Venezuela remains unanswered. Rather than evidence of a paradox, these observations suggest aggregate indicators inadequately reflect lower-level mechanisms, and particularly how people's relationships might provide them with motivations to engage in violence, or social controls that can keep them from violence. Matching an aggregate individual-level measure (Gini coefficient) to an aggregate interaction-level measure (homicide rate) may be problematic and justifies the focus of this thesis on how people's interactions and relationships might mitigate or mediate any connections between inequality and violence.

#### **1.4 Research questions**

These observations lead into a set of research questions that define the research approach. The underlying research question is:

**Can the Venezuelan paradox help clarify any connection(s) between inequality and violence?**

Sadly, the figures described above make Venezuela an apt candidate for a 'deviant' case study, a case that in light of the literature demonstrates a surprising value (Gerring, 2007). By looking at this case we may learn a great deal about the lower-level mechanisms that may be responsible for often found correlations between inequality and violence in different contexts. This research question translates into one primary question and three sets of sub-questions:

##### **1. (How) does inequality relate to violence in Venezuela?**

The fact the homicide rate and Gini coefficient do not correlate in Venezuela does not mean there is no relationship between inequality and violence. This thesis looks at lower-level

mechanisms that may influence this correlation. Chapter 2 takes an in-depth look at the theoretical assumptions behind frequently found correlations, showing that few theories suggest a direct relationship between inequality and violence. Instead, the literature suggests more indirect effects, often through people's interactions and relationships. These relationships are seen to generate expectations that can motivate people to engage in violence, instill people with social control mechanisms that can keep them from violence, or even generate violence themselves if other forms of conflict resolution are unavailable. These relationships are not reflected in the Gini coefficient, and justify this thesis' focus thereon.

In order to explore the question of whether, and how, inequality might relate to violence in Venezuela, I argue that we need to understand, first, how inequality is expressed in people's daily interactions and relationships, not in income differences between everyone within an abstract boundary, second, how people's relationships might work in making them more or less prone to use violence, and third, what the characteristics of these violent interactions are.

**1.1. What are the characteristics of barrio residents' interactions and relationships? What sorts of opportunities, expectations and informal social controls do these relationships offer? Can a personal network approach help us answer these questions?**

The first set of assumptions this thesis aims to disentangle is how people's relationships, rather than abstract boundaries, reflect their opportunities and expectations, as well as informal social control mechanisms. This thesis focuses on barrio residents' relationships, as this is where the majority of Venezuela's deadly violence occurs (see Chapter 3). It looks at how personal network data can be used to look at barrio residents' actual opportunities, expectations and informal social controls. Chapter 5 focuses specifically on these questions.

**1.2. What can an exploration of people's relationships tell us about the effects of inequality on violence at the micro-level? Do more violent people's relationships provide them with motivations to engage in violence, do they lack necessary controls to keep them from violence, or is the structure of relationships more conducive to violence?**

A second set of questions explores how people's relationships might mediate or mitigate an effect of inequality at the micro-level. It will be explored whether people's relationships might provide motivations to engage in violence through instilling a gap between their opportunities

and their expectations. It will also be explored whether people's relationships can mitigate the effects of inequality, through providing them with informal social controls that can keep them from violence. Chapter 6 focuses on these research questions.

### **1.3. What are the characteristics of deadly interactions? What are the meanings and characteristics of el malandreo, and why do malandros use such deadly violence?**

A third set of questions is influenced by an evaluation of the homicide rate in Chapter 3, which suggests many deadly interactions occur between malandros, people that identify with el malandreo, a Venezuelan gangster identity. It developed more clearly whilst I was on fieldwork and gained access to these malandros (how I did so is explained in Chapter 4), allowing me to explore in more detail the meanings of their identity as well as the violence they use. Chapter 7 focuses on these research questions.

The term malandreo stems from 'mal andar', meaning literally 'go wrong, be wrong, be on a bad path or route'. It is a term that carries intrinsic meaning in the Venezuelan context and refers to a variety of illegal activities, often in groups of likeminded others, such as robbing, selling drugs and also killing. Here and throughout this thesis I use el malandreo to refer to a cultural identity, a set of qualities and beliefs that in this case revolves around illegal activities and associating in troublesome youth groups that are defined in other contexts as gangs (see also 2.2.1 for detailed discussion). I thus see it as a Venezuelan gangster identity that has evolved into a governance system, proscribing rules and norms for malandros, the people that identify with it.

### **1.5 Thesis outline**

This thesis explores some connections between inequality and violence in Venezuela, looking particularly at how people's interactions and relationships might influence these connections. It is exploratory and hypothesis-generating rather than quantitative and hypothesis-testing.

This chapter outlines the general motivations and rationale behind the research approach. It questions claims of a Venezuelan paradox; that inequality does not relate to violence in Venezuela. Instead, it suggests correlating the Gini coefficient and homicide rate might not adequately capture the underlying mechanisms that might be responsible for correlations often found in different contexts. It puts forward the questions to be addressed and summarises the contributions the thesis makes to the literature.

Chapter 2 positions the research approach in the literature that has investigated connections between inequality and violence. It makes a distinction between perspectives that assume inequality generates motivations or meanings for violence, perspectives that stress the mitigating effects of social control and perspectives that see violence itself as social organisation and social control. Almost all of these perspectives make assumptions about the mitigating and mediating effects of people's relationships, but often have difficulty operationalising them in empirical research. Because inequality is usually conceived as an aggregate variable, and data on violence are readily available at the aggregate level, most research has looked at this relationship at this level. Nevertheless, these macro-level data tell us very little of the underlying mechanisms that might be responsible for often found correlations between inequality and violence. This chapter makes a case for evaluating the role people's actual relationships might have in connections between inequality and violence, and particularly for using a personal network approach that can capture these relationships but has not been used very often in the study of violence.

Chapter 3 explores Venezuela's administrative boundaries and sets out some parameters for methodological and empirical chapters that follow. It paints a paper picture of Venezuela's internally divided worlds, the durable social inequalities reinforced by centuries of colonially imposed divisions between serviced centres and informally constructed barrios. Traditional political-administrative boundaries, and inequality measures calculated on the basis of these boundaries, do not reflect these differences very well. Further, recent changes in aggregate income inequality fail to tell us anything about the aspects of inequality that are often seen to be important in generating violence; people's motivations or their social controls, making the case for exploring in more detail how people's relationships might provide these. This chapter also evaluates limited available data on violence, showing that violence in Venezuela is uncannily deadly and homicide rates show a pattern of gradual spread across the country, rather than reflect a continuous and generalised increase.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodological tools and strategies that were used to collect data on people's opportunities, interactions and relationships, as well as experiences of and involvement in violence in two different cities, Catia and Cumaná. It pays particular attention to the strategies that were used to gain access to people involved in violence, through hospitals, prisons and on the streets, and the ethical issues related to this approach. Over the course of a year's fieldwork, I collected both qualitative observation and interview data, through various unstructured

individual and group interviews, as well as more quantitative personal network data, through semi-structured interviews with 45 respondents. Qualitative interview records were transcribed and, together with fieldnotes of unrecorded interviews and observations, analysed through repeated reading, coding and making annotations. Semi-structured interviews were coded in Excel and analysed using E-net and SPSS. These data and analyses provide the basis for the empirical chapters to follow.

Chapter 5, the first empirical chapter, explores barrio residents' interactions and relationships making use of the personal network data collected for 45 respondents, and qualitative data to illustrate the findings. It focuses in particular on how these relationships provide opportunities, expectations, and informal social control. The barrio dwellers in this sample have relative little access to formal jobs in their networks and do not rate their quality of life very high on average. Nevertheless, they can earn relatively good money in informal professions and do not necessarily feel worse off than their interaction networks. Whereas these findings could be interpreted as tentative evidence that some barrio residents' relationships do indeed provide motivations for violence, or reinforce the meaning of violent identities, there is little evidence that these relationships lack informal social controls. Barrio residents' relationships are strong and dense, offering plenty of social control. This chapter questions the relevance of looking for evidence of informal social control on the neighbourhood level. It is argued that, in absence of formal institutions, violence is a form of informal social control in the barrio and *el malandreo* can be seen to provide it.

Chapter 6 explores some effects of inequality at the micro-level using a number of measures of involvement in violence collected from the 45 people that completed the semi-structured network questionnaire, relating them to their interactions and relationships. One of these, a composite violence measure based on a number of conducts that involve guns and *malandro* behaviours, such as robbery and shoot-outs, is particularly well-suited to explore some potential determinants of the type of deadly violence this thesis is interested in. Nevertheless, this chapter shows that more violent people's relationships do not necessarily provide them with more motivations than others in this sample. Further, there is no evidence they would be subject to less informal social control, on the contrary, violent people often see themselves as applying social control. In all, it is questioned whether looking for individual differences is a productive avenue for understanding this type of violence, and whether looking at the interactions in which this violence occurs is a much more fruitful approach for future research. It takes up this train of thought in the following chapter.

Chapter 7 draws on qualitative and observation data collected from malandros to explore the meaning and expressions of el malandreo, with particular attention for the deadly violence it uses. It shows how el malandreo developed into an institution, or a governance system that proscribes rules and sanctions, but also offers existential meaning, livelihood and respect. The rules of el malandreo revolve around an imaginary of random violence whereby malandros see themselves as protectors of the barrio against this random violence. The violence malandros use has important endogenous feedback effects, reinforced by the use of guns. It generates expectations for future behaviour, whereby violence becomes a pre-emptive response to future violence, continuously reproducing deadly cycles of violence that further legitimate this institution. This violence is no longer directly related to the inequalities that are at the basis of this institution, yet firmly rooted in the way malandros are connected in a conflictive network of fear and reciprocity.

Chapter 8 draws these findings together in a conclusion. This thesis argues that historical inequalities in opportunities and formal social control facilitated the institutionalisation of el malandreo, but the deadly violence malandros use is no longer a direct function of these inequalities, but of interactions between malandros and the expectations these interactions generate. This chapter explores the reverse impact this violence has on inequality. By instilling fear, deadly violence locks people up in trusted networks of similar others, continuously reproducing the uncertainties and inequalities that are at the basis of this violence in the first place. This chapter also makes a case for a relational understanding of violence. Rather than embedding violence in individuals, or abstract communities, researchers should focus more frequently on the relationships and interactions that produce it.

## **1.6 Contribution**

In all, this thesis makes some important contributions to the literature.

- First, in looking at the case of Venezuela, it broadens the focus of a literature that remains heavily reliant on empirical research in the global North to a country that is disproportionally affected by deadly violence. Venezuela is a sad laboratory for criminologists; homicide remains a rare occasion in the global North, but is a daily reality in Venezuela. This thesis makes a contribution to a global literature on deadly violence, but also importantly to the Venezuelan literature itself. As will become clear throughout the



thesis, few researchers have studied this deadly violence, or its protagonists, in Venezuela. In making suggestions for future research and policy, it is hoped this thesis might inspire researchers as well as policy makers to devote more attention to a violence that has such an irretraceable and devastating impact on too many Venezuelans. Specifically, this thesis suggests this violence is driven by gun violence between *malandros*, and programmes that have been aimed at containing the spread of this type of violence in the US might be effective in dealing with violence reduction as a start. Mitigating the institutionalised networks of *el malandreo* will require interventions of an entirely different order and may entail involving *malandros* as capable actors in Venezuela's security debate.

- Second, in evaluating how people's relationships might influence connections between inequality and violence, it makes an important contribution to a literature that is predominantly quantitative and macro-level in nature. This literature often focuses on testing the strength or direction of a relationship between abstract indicators, rather than exploring the underlying mechanisms. This thesis hopes to provide insights that can advance macro-level research, by exploring the lower-level mechanisms that might be driving often found correlations between inequality and violence. The findings reiterate the importance of incorporating indicators that adequately reflect the absence of formal social control institutions. They also suggest that understanding violence may imply making a distinction between different types of violence, the type of gun homicide that affects Venezuela may be driven by local interactional dynamics more than material inequalities. Further, researchers might need to step away from a rational-actor framework by seeing homicides as what they are; violent interactions, not violent people, and looking at how people's interaction patterns rather than their attributes produce aggregate homicide rates. Macro-level research could incorporate indicators that reflect these dynamics better than the Gini coefficient. Advances in network theory and methodology offer perspectives on incorporating this type of data, bringing us to a third contribution.
- Third, by using a personal network approach it makes a methodological contribution to the study of violence at the micro-level. Personal network research offers a distinct view on micro-level context, by looking at people's interaction networks as the concrete source of their ideas, opportunities and behaviour. Many theoretical perspectives make assumptions about people's relationships, but have difficulty exploring them in practice, often relying on static indicators of these relationships. A network approach captures some of the dynamics of social interaction; it takes a picture of people's relationships that is not limited

by abstract boundaries. Perhaps the most interesting finding that emerges at the individual level is that there appears to be little difference in terms of strength or density of ties between the networks of people who have been involved in violence and those who have not, which is corroborated in the few previous studies that have looked at personal networks of violent offenders. Future research should evaluate these findings with much larger samples and in different contexts. This finding further suggests moving away from a rational-actor framework and looking at how people's interactions rather than their attributes might influence their involvement in violence.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter engages with a considerable literature on a supposed relationship between inequality and violence. The proposed mechanisms behind this relationship are for the most part theoretically intuitive. Nevertheless, the empirical evidence for these mechanisms is not as clear as often implied. This chapter makes a distinction between theories that suggest inequality generates motivations and meanings for violence, theories that emphasise the mitigating effect of social bonds and conventional institutions through providing informal social control mechanisms, and theories that look at how violence itself can provide social control in interaction. Many of these perspectives make assumptions about how people's relationships affect connections between inequality and violence, but have not frequently focused on these relationships. I thus make a case for a qualitative approach that incorporates insights from network theory to study the micro-level interactions and relationships that define inequality and how these might be related to violence.

A large number of studies have evaluated correlations between aggregate indicators of income inequality (mostly the Gini coefficient) and violence (mostly homicide rates). The majority of these studies finds a positive relationship, especially at the cross-national level (Blau and Blau, 1982; Fajnzylber et al., 2002; Fox and Hoelscher, 2010; Gartner, 2000; Hsieh and Pugh, 1993; Kick and LaFree, 1985; Ouimet, 2012; Pratt and Cullen, 2005; Unnithan and Whitt, 1992). Nevertheless, it is difficult to appreciate what these correlations might reflect, they allow us to conclude that where income differences between everyone in a population are larger on average, there tend to be more homicides. We can certainly not conclude this is because more people are motivated to use violence or lacking informal controls, and thus more likely to be violent. Moreover, a closer look at this empirical evidence reveals it is not as clear as is often assumed. A few cross-national studies have not been able to replicate this finding (Pridemore, 2008; Uludag et al., 2009). Longitudinal designs are only rarely adopted, and have more difficulty reproducing this effect (Goertzel and Kahn, 2009). Subnational studies, most frequently conducted among US states, cities and neighbourhoods, also appear to produce less consistent findings (Kennedy et al., 1991; Land et al., 1990; Morenoff et al., 2001; Pridemore, 2011). The little available evidence from Southern hemisphere nations such as South Africa and Brazil is inconsistent (Demombynes and Ozler, 2005; Nadanovsky et al., 2009; Szwarcwald et al., 1999). As evaluated in Chapter 1, Venezuela is a case 'par excellence' where actually, these aggregate

indicators are not positively correlated, justifying a focus on the lower-level mechanisms that might influence this finding.

This chapter first defines this thesis' central concepts in more detail. The chapter then evaluates theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence, making the case for focussing on how people's relationships might affect connections between inequality and violence.

## **2.2 Conceptual discussion**

The core concepts of this thesis are thick concepts, subject to varying definitions, interpretations and extensive academic debate. In this section I aim to clarify this thesis' position within these conceptual debates.

### **2.2.1 Violence, gangs and el malandreo**

Violence is inherently subjective, what is deemed violent in one context or culture might not be seen as such in another (Beirne, 1983; Black, 2011). Nevertheless, the figures discussed in Chapter 1 imply violence has very real, observable consequences, which can be compared, contrasted and analysed. The interest of this thesis is in the deadly, interpersonal violence that disproportionately affects countries in the global South, of which Venezuela is no exception (UNODC, 2014). Chapter 3 explores this violence in more detail, showing that the deadly violence that has Venezuela under its spell is a violence disproportionately enacted with guns and in public places. It often occurs between relative strangers, young males that know of each other, but do not interact on a regular basis. Further, a large proportion can be assigned to 'malandros', people that identify with 'el malandreo', a Venezuelan gangster identity. The characteristics of this violence show more similarities with gang gun violence that has been studied more extensively in the United States (e.g. Decker and Curry, 2002; Rosenfeld et al., 1999; Tita and Abrahamse, 2004) than it does with types of violence that have been of more concern in other contexts, violence that occurs in relationships, between people who share a common history (Miethe et al., 2004). This type of violence might thus be different from everyday violence that is often seen to pervade poor communities and expresses itself in verbal and physical aggression, whether in the household or public spaces (Romero-Salazar et al., 2009; Scheper-Hughes, 1993). It is a violence between armed actors, but should equally be distinguished from armed violence used by state actors in civil wars, as there is no contestation of traditional political-

administrative powers<sup>1</sup>. It should also be distinguished from crime, acts punished by law. Many violent acts are indeed criminalised by law, but violence is not a necessary component of crime, and crime is not a necessary component of violence. Nevertheless, the literature on violence does not frequently distinguish between these different types of violence, crime in general, or even violent individuals, frequently using aggregate homicide or other crime rates as indicators of violence, or even violent people, potentially compromising their explanatory potential (Miethe et al., 2004).

Violence is notoriously hard to measure, as its manifestation often remains hidden from view. Much violent behaviour is criminalised, and official crime statistics are thus frequently used to approximate violence. Nevertheless, these statistics carry important biases (Maguire, 2007; UNODC, 2011). The criminological literature refers in this respect to a 'dark number', denoting the incidents that are never detected, reported or recorded and thus never brought to trial or punished. Homicide statistics are frequently considered the most reliable indicators of violence. The severity of homicide, and difficulty to hide the consequences make it highly likely to be reported to, or discovered by, official institutions (Neapolitan, 1997). They are seen to be the tip of a violent iceberg, assuming that for each homicide there is a proportionally larger number of other violent crimes that do not become known (UNODC, 2011). Chapter 3 questions this assumption, suggesting violence in Venezuela is extremely deadly and homicide rates do not necessarily reflect a proportionally larger base of violent incidents (see p.73). The use of homicide rates as indicators of violence may thus be particularly problematic on the cross-national level, where higher homicide rates may be a factor of less developed health systems or higher availability of firearms, reflecting higher mortality from violence, rather than more violence as such (Howard et al., 2000). Further, aggregate homicide rates reflect the number of homicides in a geographic area, not the number of offenders, let alone their internal motivations. That an area has high official homicide rates does not imply that the people that live there are more violent. Perpetrators do not necessarily live in the administrative areas where offences are recorded (Morenoff et al., 2001). Studies that look at these rates can often count on substantial variation, particularly on the cross-national level, but cannot account for individual differences in offending (Ponsaers et al., 2001). Victimisation and self-report surveys were developed to counter issues with crime statistics and offer distinct individual-level perspectives on violence. Victimisation surveys ask people about their personal experiences of crime and violence (Lupton

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<sup>1</sup> Although, as I will show below, it could be seen as an emergent form of social order that questions the monopoly of violence usually instilled in traditional political-administrative powers.

and Tulloch, 1999). Self-report surveys ask people about their involvement in various delinquent or criminal activities and allow for exploring individual variation in violence (Creighton et al., 2003; O'Connor et al., 2001). The social and legal consequences of admitting to violence make these approaches highly sensitive and ethically difficult, particularly when it comes to more severe instances of violence (Lee and Stanko, 2003; Thornberry and Krohn, 2000). Nevertheless, they are able to illuminate the 'dark number' to some extent, avoiding biases associated with the functioning and effectiveness of the criminal justice system<sup>2</sup>.

Where homicide rates are related to the characteristics of geographical areas, self-report data are matched with individual characteristics, ignoring that over and above a geographical space, violence occurs in a specific relational space (involving a perpetrator, victim and often third parties), and that even the most violent individuals are violent only a minority of their time (Collins, 2009). Violence is ultimately an interaction, not a fixed attribute of individuals. As will become evident throughout this thesis, this relational space is difficult to materialise in empirical research (Birkbeck and LaFree, 1993). Studies that evaluate the details of violent interactions are often qualitative and interpretive due to the need for intensive data collection. Homicide case files habitually contain information that conveys characteristics of the event and the people involved, but these are not always available or reliable, in Venezuela for instance police caseloads are so high that homicides are not frequently described or even investigated in detail until they appear before the courts, and the small percentage that do make it to the courts are subject to endemic delays (see Chapter 3 section 3.3.2.4). Qualitative interview data with people involved in violence can also offer interaction-level detail, but they need to be collected ad-hoc. Further, these people may be motivated to interpret violent events in a different light in an interview situation, justifying their actions post-fact (Jacobs and Wright, 2006). Research on violence, like the current project, is often inevitably reliant on individual accounts and reports or aggregated crime rates that cannot entirely do justice to the relationships in which it occurs. Its explanations are then also frequently sought in abstract community or individual characteristics, rather than interactions and relationships. It is here this thesis aims to contribute, by looking at communities and individuals as defined by their relationships rather than their attributes, and exploring how these relationships may be more or less conducive to violence.

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<sup>2</sup> Many issues remain, see (ICVS, 2011) for an elaborate overview. The use of survey data brings additional bias related to respondents' honesty, memory and inclination to give socially desirable answers.

That these deadly interactions often involve *malandros*, or people that identify with the Venezuelan gangster identity of *el malandreo*, requires a consideration of the equally thick concept of gangs. Gangs have been something of a hot topic in academia over the last few decades. Nevertheless, there is very little consensus on what gangs actually are, how they are organised, or whether and why people join them. Extensive reviews of these debates are offered elsewhere (Decker et al., 2012; Esbensen and Maxson, 2011; Wood and Alleyne, 2010), I limit myself here to a gang definition, which in itself covers an extensive literature (Ball and Curry, 1995; Esbensen et al., 2001). The influential Eurogang group has put forward a consensus definition that has allowed a productive strand of comparative research on the emergence of gangs, the people that identify with them, as well as the (often violent) activities they engage in. It defines a 'youth gang, or troublesome youth group' as 'a durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of their group identity' (Esbensen and Maxson, 2011, p.5). The definition grew at least partly out of concern that the word gang provokes hyped connotations of hierarchical structure and organisation that are not usually observed in the field. This puzzle is more formally known as the 'Eurogang Paradox' (Klein, 2001). When authors started investigating violent youth groups in Europe they shied away from calling them gangs, because they did not fit a preconceived notion of gangs as highly organised and hierarchical. It was established that very few gangs, even in the US, exhibit the type of organisation that is often ascribed to them. The consensus definition then, does not assume any type of organisation or structure, apart from some durability with regards to the group identity, rather than its members (Klein et al., 2006).

Some authors problematize the inclusion of illegal activity in a definition of gangs (Ball and Curry, 1995; Short, 1990). They argue a definition that includes the behaviour that also needs to be explained is tautological. By only including those youth groups that engage in illegal activities, possible explanations for their activities that are more generally a consequence of group behaviour are obscured. Whilst I sympathise with these authors' view of gangs as just another youth group, and agree that criminal or violent behaviours are only a minor part of gang activities, I also believe that the particular type of violence gangs use is what sets them apart from other groups. It will be argued in Chapter 7 that this violence helps legitimise the institutional structures of *el malandreo*. Without (lethal) violence between them, gangs might be criminal organisations, or indeed, any other youth group. The more fundamental problem with the definition above is the lack of clarification of what is understood by group (Fleisher, 2006). Conceptualising gangs as distinct groups with shared identities implies group boundaries and suggests these are clear and relatively static. I argue instead, based on the data that shape

this thesis, that individual gang group identities are socially constructed, in interaction with other gang groups and the wider community. These interactions generate shared meanings that are reproduced through the cultural identity of *el malandreo*. Nevertheless, *el malandreo* is more than a cultural identity, it is a governance structure, an institutional framework that proscribes rules and generates expectations for the people that identify with it (Scott, 2005). Overall, I argue for understanding gang groups as local organisational expressions ('franchises' as Hagedorn (2008) calls them) of this institution. Rather than clearly defined groups, they are dynamic networks of interacting individuals (Morselli, 2009). The particular identities single gang groups in Venezuela might claim are spurious. Individual gang group identities or the broader identity of *el malandreo* are not essences of these groups or individuals, but a set of cultural values and norms that are recalled in particular interactions.

This thesis thus navigates the complex tension field between violent interactions, violent individuals and violent identities through exploring deadly (gun) violence that is often enacted by individuals that assume the violent identity of *el malandreo*. For this study, I use both secondary data on violence, as well as primary data on violent interactions and self-reported violence, challenges of which will be discussed in appropriate methodological sections.

### **2.2.2 Social control**

Notions of violence are inherently related to notions of social control, which can be defined as 'the mechanisms, in the form of patterns of pressure, through which society maintains social order and cohesion' (Carmichael, 2012, p.1). The objective of social control is to maintain conformity to established norms and rules (Ibid., p.1). As violence is often seen as a transgression of the social order, a defiance of established norms and rules, social control is also aimed at discouraging and castigating violence. It is frequently assumed that appropriate social controls can avert propensities for violence. Social control can be applied through formal and informal sanctions, that can be positive as well as negative. Formal sanctions are embedded in law and applied by state institutions, such as prison sentences that are specified in countries the world over for various violent behaviours. Informal social control and sanctions emerge from informal institutions and exchanges such as education, family, religion, peer groups etc. Informal social control can be as varied as an unappreciative look from a friend to a positive endorsement from a parent or colleague, but is equally aimed at maintaining conformity. All perspectives on social control agree on the distinction between formal and informal social control, nevertheless,



there are differing views on what constitutes the social order which social control aims to maintain and protect.

For the purposes of this discussion, I turn to the sociological distinction between macro- and micro-level perspectives on social order (Vincke, 2007)<sup>3</sup>. Macro-level perspectives evaluate the social order from the top down, they look at the whole to explain constituent parts. Structural-functionalist perspectives for instance, assume a broad consensus and solidarity on societal norms and rules. Conflict perspectives do not assume this broad consensus or solidarity, but suggest the social order is the product of class conflict. Both perspectives adopt a macro-sociological approach to social control, and are ultimately based on classical enlightenment traditions suggesting there is a comprehensive social order which norms and rules are entrenched in a social contract between the state and its citizens, and formalised in law (Rousseau, 1920). Citizens (voluntarily or forcedly) give up some of their freedoms in exchange for protection by the state, and the state is the only entity able to use force to implement this social contract, through a monopoly on violence. Formal social control is then the enforcement of this contract through state institutions, whereas informal social control is based on citizens' internalisation of the norms and rules embedded in this social contract. Violence by individuals whom do not represent the state is interpreted as an aberration of this contract, as the failure or inherent class-bias thereof, and sanctions aimed at reinstituting the social contract. In their focus on macro-level structures, these perspectives ignore different and emergent forms of social control and social order that arise from micro-level interactions and relationships.

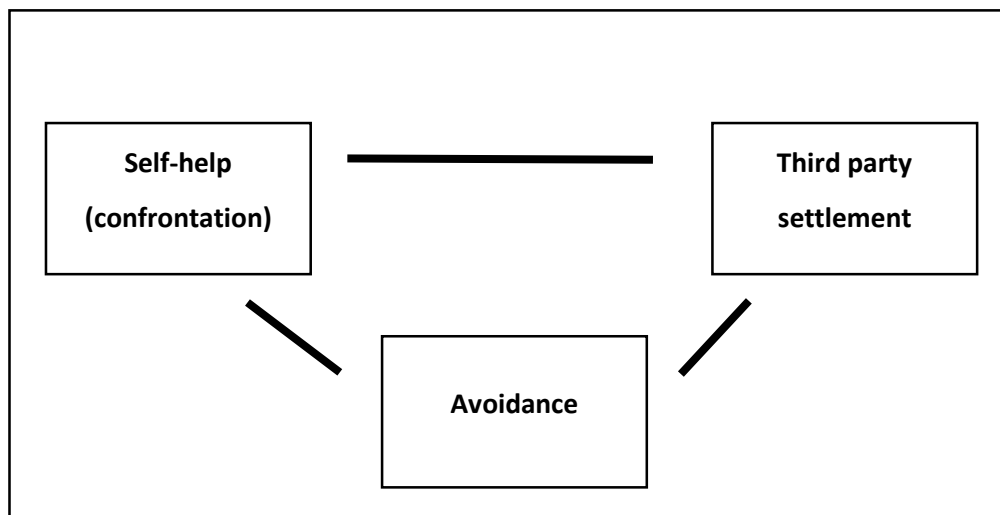
Micro-level perspectives depart from an overarching (whether cohesive or elitarian) social order; suggesting that social order, norms and rules are the product of, and constructed through, repeated interactions. These interactions, rather than an abstract social contract, define the forms of social control. These perspectives examine the micro-level processes and mechanisms by which rules and norms become established guidelines for behaviour (Scott, 2005). The work of Donald Black (1983, 1993, 2011) adopts such a micro-level approach. He develops a broad theory of social control, that does not make reference to an abstract social order, defining it as 'conflict management', the handling of right and wrong (1993, p. xiii). In Black's view, conflict, clashes of right and wrong (2011), is everywhere, it is an inherent part of social life, but it is handled differently depending on the social positions of the people between whom the conflict

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<sup>3</sup> This is of course an abstraction of the many sociological perspectives that have written on the nature of social order.

exists<sup>4</sup>. Law, formal social control, is but one of the many forms of social control. Violence, in Black's conception, is not an aberration of a social contract, but a form of (confrontational) social control that is particularly likely under certain social conditions. All forms of social control reflect the pattern of social relationships in which they occur, they vary according to their location in what he terms 'social space', which varies according to three dimensions, (a) vertical distance or status inequality, which reflects material or authority differences between people, (b) relational distance, the degree to which people participate in one another's lives, and (c) cultural distance, the degree of diversity such as differences in language, religion, ethnicity etc. (Black, 2011). In his 1993 contribution 'The social structure of right and wrong', Black identifies a number of elementary forms of conflict management, three of which (shown in Figure 2-1) are pertinent to this discussion; self-help (or confrontation), avoidance, and settlement<sup>5</sup>.

**Figure 2-1 Black's (1993) elementary forms of conflict management (author's own)**



Black contrasts self-help or confrontational social control with other forms of conflict management, suggesting the prevalence of self-help as social control is proportionate to these other forms. Where, given the structure of their relationships, people cannot easily turn to avoidance or rely on authoritative third parties to settle or resolve it, they will be more likely to use self-help. Avoidance is most likely where people are relative equals, but relationally distant, that is they lead relatively mobile lives in which they can easily evade each other. Settlement behaviours occur more frequently in conflicts between people of different status. Black devotes

<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the interpretation of something as 'wrong' depends on social distance, people are more likely to be offended by a status challenge from relative equals than superiors.

<sup>5</sup> Black identifies many other forms, and includes negotiation and toleration as additional elementary forms. Nevertheless, a discussion of all these forms would unnecessarily confound the points made here. I feel these three forms succinctly summarise Black's thinking, but refer the reader to his work for a much more detailed discussion.

considerable attention to authoritative third parties that can further settlement between parties in conflict. Third parties can be, but are not necessarily formal or state agents. The authoritativeness of third parties varies according to the social distance between parties in conflict, among equals and intimates third parties are less likely to be authoritative than among people that differ in status, where the law is more frequently called upon. Black predicts that where authoritative third parties are absent, making reference to hunter-gatherer societies, little settlement behaviour will occur, and self-help will be more likely (Black, 1993).

In all, where traditional perspectives see violence as emerging where social control has failed, Black sees violence itself as a form of informal social control. Violence is not a consequence of the failure of social control in maintaining an abstract social order, but is informal social control, maintaining conformity to rules and norms established in interaction. In this thesis I compare and contrast these frameworks by looking at how (informal) social control may be implemented to prevent violence, and how violence itself could be seen as a form of informal social control. Although the concept of social control is central to many theories discussed below, its operationalisation often remains vague, the effects of formal social control on violence are frequently ignored, whereas informal social control is often assumed from the mere presence of relationships, without exploring in detail how and when these relationships might provide informal social control.

### **2.2.3 Networks, a relational perspective on inequality**

Inequality is often seen to generate violence through a number of mechanisms that will be explored below. Many scholars conceptualise inequality as a static distribution of resources that tends to be operationalised with the Gini coefficient<sup>6</sup> of incomes within an administrative boundary, such as a country, state or neighbourhood. A larger Gini coefficient is then interpreted as a more unequal distribution of resources and opportunities within this boundary. This strategy has a number of limitations. First, there are severe problems with the validity and reliability of income data, particularly in developing countries (Cramer, 2003; Seekings, 2007). Szekely and Hilgert (2007) evaluated income inequalities in Latin America and found these are

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<sup>6</sup> The Gini coefficient is a measure of inequality based on the sum of the differences between each pair of observations. It ranges from 0, where there are no differences, to 1, where 1 case has everything compared to nothing for the remaining sample.

influenced by discrepancies in data collection rather than underlying trends in inequality<sup>7</sup>. Second, the Gini coefficient is a vertical measure of inequality. It measures differences between all people within a certain boundary with little attention for the actual structure of relationships. It is not very sensitive to the polarisation of a distribution and does not necessarily indicate more people have less resources, it only reflects absolute differences between all observations<sup>8</sup>. Third, these perspectives are inherently limited because these aggregate administrative boundaries do not necessarily reflect people's access to resources and opportunities, it is doubtful abstract boundaries represent the groups people actually interact and identify with, rely on or compare themselves to (Pedersen, 2004). Some studies look at lower levels of aggregation, arguing neighbourhood or city boundaries better reflect people's communities. Nevertheless, these approaches still make an abstraction of the groups people interact with and compare themselves to. Wellman (1999) has argued quite convincingly that even people's neighbourhoods no longer accurately reflect their communities. People's access to opportunities, values and ideas is not defined by country, neighbourhood, nor even individual characteristics, but the relationships they have (Vertovec, 2009).

Here, a more relational, micro-level interpretation of inequality is suggested, one that takes account of the interactions and relationships that constitute aggregate patterns of inequality. I see these aggregate patterns as the result of repeated interactions and exchanges within, but also across, social boundaries (Crossley, 2010; Tilly, 1998). However, people's interactions are diverse and fluid. The wide variety of weak and loose interactions between people is difficult to capture. Network theory, a paradigm more than a theory (Carrington and Scott, 2011), offers some conceptual tools to make sense of this diversity.

Networks are seen as groups or systems of interacting individuals. Interactions that occur with some regularity develop into relationships. Both interactions and relationships are called 'ties', they reflect connections between individuals. These ties can be described in terms of their content (e.g. work, family, social support), durability, frequency and intensity. Network theory makes a useful distinction between bonds, bridges and links (Dudwick et al., 2006; Narayan, 2002). Bonds refer to ties between similar people. Bridges and links refer to the ties that connect

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<sup>7</sup> Unreported survey incomes tend to be ignored in inequality calculations and substituting them dramatically alters rankings. These missing values vary substantially between countries. Venezuela has the highest percentage (23.3%) of missing incomes among 18 countries analysed.

<sup>8</sup> A similar Gini coefficient may represent quite different distributions, as we will see in the methodological chapter. For this project, I selected two areas that had similar coefficients, but quite differently shaped distributions.

dissimilar people within and across social boundaries, respectively (Lin, 1999; Smith, 2009). Links occur across 'explicit, formal, or institutionalized power or authority gradients in society' (Szreter and Woolcock, 2004, p.655). Bonds and bridges are important for social support, whereas links are important for access to new ideas and opportunities (Granovetter, 1973). An important network principle is homophily (McPherson et al., 2001). It states that people tend to interact and exchange more readily and comfortably with people similar to themselves; interaction is more frequent within than between social boundaries. Bonds and bridges between similar people thus tend to be stronger than links. Durable inequalities arise when different markers of similarity run along the same lines, when race for instance also reflects income inequalities (Lin, 2002; Tilly, 1998). In this thesis, we will see that in Venezuela, a salient boundary operates between people that live in barrios, informally constructed areas, and people that live in serviced centres. This distinction is not reflected very well in administrative boundaries (see Chapter 3), but intrinsically linked to people's professional opportunities, perceptions of their quality of life and interaction patterns (see Chapter 5). Further, this boundary also reflects differential exposure to violence; Venezuela's deadly violence occurs predominantly in the barrio (see Chapter 3).

Network data can be collected, described and analysed through qualitative as well as quantitative methods (Edwards, 2010). A distinction is frequently made between sociocentric or whole networks and egocentric or personal networks (McCarty and Molina, 2010). Whole network research looks at interactions within a well-defined boundary such as a company, school or list of countries and evaluates the spread of information and ideas within these boundaries. Personal networks explore the interactions people have, from the egocentric perspective of these people, without imposing boundaries<sup>9</sup>. Personal network data enable an exploration of people's daily interactions and how these reflect aggregate inequalities, they offer a unique connection between micro- and macro-level data by showing across and between which boundaries people's daily interactions occur.

In this thesis, I use both qualitative and personal network methods to explore the interactions and relationships people have and how they reflect aggregate inequalities. This methodology is explained in detail in Chapter 4, but a brief explanation is in order here. In personal network research people are asked to name a number of people they interact with, what sort of relationship they have with these people, and also whether the people mentioned know each

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<sup>9</sup> Apart from a limit on the number of significant others people can mention (see also 4.3.3.3).

other. This yields an interaction network which composition can be analysed for the types of relationships that are present (or absent), and the structure of which reflects how dense these interaction networks are. The composition of these networks reflects people's access to ideas and opportunities, whereas the structure, relationships between people in the network, is important for the spread of information and ideas. In dense networks, where people's significant others also know each other, information flows easily, which also constrains these people, as others find out quickly what they do.

How people's networks might be related to violence is a little explored but growing area of study, as we will see below (Papachristos, 2010). First, the research approach is positioned within current theoretical and empirical frameworks.

### **2.3 Theoretical and empirical perspectives on the connections between inequality and violence**

This section explores a number of perspectives on the connections between inequality and violence. This overview is certainly not exhaustive but aims to engage with some, mainly criminological, perspectives that are frequently called upon when explaining correlations between inequality and violence. In comparison to an abundance of macro-level research as indicated by the studies that introduced this chapter, little research has explicitly explored connections between violence and inequality at the micro-level, partly due to the difficulties of obtaining data at this level. Official statistics show that violence is more likely to occur in deprived areas, and violent offenders, as well as their victims, are often young males of lower socioeconomic status (Aaltonen et al., 2012; Maguire et al., 2007). Nevertheless, most poor or deprived young men are never violent (Collins, 2009; Hoffmann, 2003; Sanjuán, 2008; Seekings and Thaler, 2011). Self-report studies, that ask people about their involvement in crime or violence, also often observe gender differences, but show that material deprivation (merely being at the bottom of an income distribution) is not a good predictor of violence (Birkbeck et al., 2010; Thornberry and Krohn, 2000). All of the perspectives discussed in this section offer explanations for these patterns, and propose mechanisms that mitigate and mediate connections between aggregate inequality and levels of violence.

Although the differences between these perspectives are not always entirely obvious and they often overlap in their assumptions, I make a (for this discussion) necessary distinction between these perspectives based on the types of effects they attribute to inequality, and particularly the

effects they expect from people's relationships. As already mentioned, an important shortcoming of all these perspectives is that they make very little conceptual distinction between different types of violence, crime and even the people that use it. We may well replace violence by crime, rape, gang violence, (motivations for joining) youth gangs, vandalism and even political violence, potentially limiting the conclusions that can be drawn. I dedicate some attention to studies that have looked at Venezuela in each section. Where quantitative research in Latin America in general and Venezuela in particular is scarce, more researchers have looked at violent identities and violence in this context. Nevertheless, these issues have received much less attention than they have in countries of the global North, although the rapidly urbanising cities of Latin America might be where the majority of today's homicidal violence and gangs are to be found (Decker and Pyrooz, 2010; Koonings and Kruijt, 2009; Rodgers and Baird, 2014; Winton, 2004).

### **2.3.1 Material motivations or meanings for violence**

This section looks at perspectives that suggest material inequality generates material or symbolic motivations and meanings for violence. These are the most intuitive and generally accepted explanations of correlations between inequality and violence.

#### **2.3.1.1 Anomie, strain and relative deprivation**

Most of these perspectives draw on the concept of anomie, that has a long tradition going back to Durkheim (1897), but was conceptualised more specifically in relation to violence by Merton (1938). Merton suggests that a macro-level gap between cultural aspirations and structural opportunities generates anomic conditions. Under these conditions, people that cannot achieve culturally projected values through legitimate means are motivated to use illegitimate means instead (Merton, 1938). Rather than objective inequality, it is the subjectively perceived gap between aspirations and the opportunities to achieve them that generates anomie, and pressures to achieve valued goals through violence<sup>10</sup>. Nevertheless, the disjunction between cultural aspirations and structural opportunities is quite hard to operationalise on the macro-level and explicit tests of this perspective have been rare (Pratt and Cullen, 2005). Strain theories are the individual-level extension of anomie theories and have an equally long tradition in criminology (Agnew, 1992). The macro-level gap between cultural aspirations and structural opportunities, is said to lead to strain on the individual level, an inability to achieve the goals

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<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, anomie theories propose that periods of economic prosperity can lead to more violence, as aspirations may rise faster than people's opportunities, widening the gap between these aspirations and opportunities (see also (Gurr, 1970)).

projected through a dominant culture. Strain is then said to lead to a number of adverse outcomes, including but not limited to violence; it can also lead to anxiety, lethargy and depression<sup>11</sup>. These theories were criticised for assuming people were influenced by a singular cultural framework and later strain theories moved away from looking at goals projected through a dominant culture to an inability to achieve positively valued goals, recognising that these goals are inherently subjective (not necessarily material) and may vary from one person to the next. Relative deprivation is a frequently cited mechanism by which inequality is said to cause strain; it implies that people base their expectations on a comparison to a reference group (Pedersen, 2004; Runciman, 1966; Webber, 2007). When people do not have the opportunities to achieve the expectations projected by this reference group, i.e. they feel deprived relative to these others, strain is said to result. This particular perspective thus assumes effects from people's relationships over and above the aggregate distribution of resources. In all, anomie and strain theories focus on the material distribution of resources, but suggest people's subjective interpretations of their opportunities, rather than objective opportunities as such, generate motivations to get involved in violence.

Studies that have (correctly) evaluated strain and relative deprivation perspectives using self-report measures at the individual level are few and far between. Apart from issues with violence, they have difficulty operationalising the many potential sources of strain, and particularly conceiving of an adequate reference group in evaluating relative deprivation, it remains most frequently conceived as a negative comparison to abstract identity groups. Smith et al. (2011) review studies that have evaluated the effects of relative deprivation and find many of them use aggregate measures. That is, they interpret aggregate inequality measures as evidence of relative deprivation making a grave attribution error<sup>12</sup> (Hojman, 2004). They conclude that studies that do measure relative deprivation correctly tend to find much stronger effect sizes than those that do not. Stiles et al. (2000) using data collected from 6,074 adults find that comparisons of respondents' family income relative to friends and a national standard predict violent crime, but comparisons to neighbours do not. Baron (2004), in an investigation of 400 homeless youth in Vancouver, finds a number of sources of strain, including these youth's assessment of their quality of life on a scale of 0 to 10, predict self-reported violent crime. Burton et al. (1994) included several measures of strain in a postal survey of 447 US adults and found a

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<sup>11</sup> Gender differences in violence are often explained this way, women would be less driven by material success and goals in the first place, but also more likely to respond differently to strain, e.g. through depression and anxiety (O'Grady, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> Also known as ecological fallacy, making inferences about individuals on the basis of aggregate statistics.



significant effect of blocked opportunities and relative deprivation on self-reported offending that disappeared when controlling for other variables; self-control and social bonds. Some authors have also evaluated strain as a predictor for gang membership, with equally mixed results (Brownfield et al., 1997; Tsunokai and Kposowa, 2009). Importantly, many of these quantitative studies correlate reports of past involvement in violence to current levels of strain reversing the theoretical order (strain coming before violence). A rare qualitative study of relative deprivation among youth in an English suburb found that these youth's involvement in crime can cause relative deprivation rather than the other way around (Webber, 2003). In all, though an intuitive and generally accepted explanation, the evidence for these perspectives is scarce.

### **2.3.1.2 Subcultural identities, symbolic status and respect**

More interpretive interpretations of anomie do not look at inequality's effects on individuals per se, but the meanings violence and violent identities generate in contexts of material deprivation. Subcultural identity perspectives argue that a lack of material means can reinforce the salience of violent identities (Wolfgang and Ferracuti, 1967). They too have a long tradition in criminology (Cohen, 1955; Ohlin and Cloward, 1960). Similar to anomie theories they focus on the material distribution of resources and assume inequality limits people's opportunities, nevertheless, it does not generate individual motivations but deviant subcultures where violence attains symbolic and existential meaning. Exclusion and rejection from mainstream society can strengthen identification with a deviant in-group that does provide belonging and self-esteem (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Early subcultural perspectives were criticised for developing 'culture of poverty' arguments, suggesting violence is an inherent normative framework of the poor (Lewis, 1971; Miller, 1958). Though often criticised, this type of argument remains active today, the gang literature in particular often attributes violence to a set of 'unique' cultural norms among gangs, that develops in exclusion from mainstream society and defines gang members, without questioning how these cultural norms guide behaviour on some occasions, but not others (Anderson, 2000; Brezina et al., 2004). Similarly, people that have few material assets are often seen to be more sensitive to perceived instances of disrespect and more likely to physically contest it through violence (Bourgois, 2003). The assumption that material deprivation leads to a higher valuation of symbolic means of achieving power, status, honour and respect<sup>13</sup>, through

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<sup>13</sup> These terms are frequently used interchangeably. Kemper (2011) argues for a clear distinction between status and power, where both refer to the extent that 'a person may extract recognition, prestige, honour, privilege and compliance in interaction from others', status allows people to do so voluntarily, power lets them extract these privileges against the will of others. Respect and honour can be seen as effects of status and/or power.

violence, runs implicitly or explicitly through many other theories. Critical perspectives, for instance, stress the inherent disempowerment of unequal social structures, violence and violent identities are forms of resistance that allow people to overcome the bleak reality of their daily lives (Wieviorka, 2009; Žižek, 2008).

Qualitative research has described the symbolic meanings of violence and violent identities in many different contexts. They highlight the effects of structural disempowerment, especially among young men, who vie for respect and recognition through violence when their identity is challenged in material terms (Bourgois, 2003; Jones and Rodgers, 2009; Savenije and Van Der Borgh, 2004; Scheper-Hughes, 1993; Vranckx, 2011; Wilkinson et al., 2009). In Venezuela, Zubillaga has explored the multiple meanings and dynamics of violence based on interviews with young (ex-)offenders (2011; 2008). In an article with Briceño-Leon (2001), she investigates the multifaceted links between exclusion and masculinity, and the search for power and respect through violent identities. Antillano (2010), describes the evolution of the Venezuelan *malandro*, from 'Robin Hood' type protector of the neighbourhood in the 1970s to one that kills for the sake of respect and status in current-day Venezuela. He sees the *malandro* as a resistance identity that inadvertently maintains the status quo; their violence ultimately reproduces existing power relations. Nevertheless, many of these perspectives have been accused of over-emphasising material dimensions of inequality, normalising violence under conditions of deprivation, but have difficulty explaining why the vast majority of those deprived do not turn to violence, or even the most violent only do so a minority of their time. More relational interpretations of these perspectives do not over-emphasise the material distribution of resources, but evaluate the wider institutional context, and the absence of formal institutions in creating an existential life project. Violent values and identities are not seen as an inherent part of lower-class communities or identity groups, but as systems of meaning that provide scripts not just in interaction with (or exclusion from) material means, but daily interactions within and across social boundaries (Young et al., 2008). I will discuss them in more detail below because we first need an account of how studies on violence tend to conceive of this institutional context.

### **2.3.1.3 Discussion**

Theories that stress the motivations and meanings of violence often focus on the material distribution of resources and argue that violence 'makes sense' when people cannot materially attain culturally projected expectations. Many of these perspectives assume people are influenced by general materialistic expectations and violence is a response to not being able to live up to these. Strain and relative deprivation theories were a response to these criticisms,

stressing subjective perception effects and many potential sources of strain, making it difficult to find adequate indicators of these intrinsically personal evaluations. In sum, although this is the most generally accepted explanation of connections between inequality and violence, there is little quantitative empirical evidence for these perspectives, partly due to difficulties in finding adequate data. The evidence on the meaning of violence stems overwhelmingly from qualitative research. These qualitative approaches have described in rich detail the processes of exclusion from mainstream society that can lead to violence and assuming violent identities, but they often focus on singularly material dimensions of inequality without taking into account the institutional context or the relationships in which violence occurs. In the next section I look at perspectives that look at potential mitigating effects of (in)formal social control.

### **2.3.2 The mitigating effects of (in)formal social control**

This section looks at perspectives that assume conventional institutions and social controls can mitigate motivations for violence. These perspectives assume people are inherently violent if not constrained by adequate social control mechanisms. They are not necessarily interested in how or why people use violence, but try and explain why they do not. These perspectives all adopt a macro-level perspective on social control, as the implementation of an abstract social contract, and violence as a deviation thereof, however, the details of how people abide by or internalise this social contract often remain implicit.

#### **2.3.2.1 Conventional institutions**

It is frequently assumed that where the state has a legitimate monopoly on violence, embedded in a social contract, citizens are kept from engaging in violence (Briceño-León, 2012b). However, few theoretical perspectives on violence have adequately conceptualised this social contract or how people might abide by it, assuming that indicators of the functioning of conventional institutions reflect a proper internalisation of societal norms and values. Institutional anomie theory (Messner et al., 2008) adds an important institutional layer to previously discussed anomie theories by arguing that conventional institutions such as family, education, and religion, can channel a materialistic focus on success and material achievement. Where an economic emphasis on material success overshadows these conventional institutions, anomie, the gap between cultural aspirations and material opportunities, is exacerbated and people may be motivated to achieve success through illegitimate means. Messner and Rosenfeld (1997) find, in line with these assumptions, that the de-commodification of labour, as measured by various indicators of welfare expenditure, is a stronger predictor of cross-national homicide rates than the Gini coefficient. LaFree (1998) talks of institutional illegitimacy, arguing that ill-equipped

political, economic and family institutions generate motivations as well as opportunities to engage in violence. There is a subtle difference with institutional anomie; this perspective does not necessarily see economic values overriding those of conventional institutions, these economic institutions may be seen as illegitimate too. Savolainen (2000), in a cross-national study of the male/female homicide ratio finds the positive effect of income inequality on homicide is particularly pronounced in nations with weak social welfare institutions. Other studies have replicated this potential mitigating effect of well-developed institutions (Krahn et al., 1986; Lee and Bankston, 1999; Neumayer, 2003; Nivette, 2013). Briceño-León (2012b), analysing changes in homicide rates in Colombia, Venezuela and Brazil concludes the rule of law (as measured by Worldwide Governance Indicators) is a stronger explanatory variable of these cross-national changes than the Gini coefficient. He argues that violence is indicative of the breakdown of the social contract between state and citizens, without specifying how this social contract might operate. Nevertheless, in an explicit test of LaFree's (1998) model of institutional illegitimacy in Venezuela, Crespo and Birkbeck (2009) do not find significant associations between indicators of the legitimacy of political, economic and family institutions and homicide rates across time.

Few of these theories explore the role and legitimacy of formal social control institutions as contributory factors to violence. Some authors have talked of legal cynicism (Sampson and Bartusch, 1998), arguing that where people are cynical about the law and law enforcement agencies, perceive them as illegitimate and unresponsive, they resort to violence more easily. Not an absence of conventional institutions as such, but the perceived irresponsiveness of formal social control institutions is seen to be more important in generating differential degrees of violence. In a test of this perspective, Kirk and Papachristos (2011) find attitudes towards the legitimacy of the law explain why homicide persisted in certain Chicago neighbourhoods during the 1990s despite declines in poverty. Sampson and Bartusch (1998) report similar findings, also in Chicago neighbourhoods. Similarly, in a cross-national study of conflict resolution tactics including Venezuela, Fournier et al. (1999) find that attitudes towards the efficacy of law were some of the strongest predictors of violence against strangers.

#### **2.3.2.2 Social disorganisation and social control**

Social disorganisation theories are similarly based on an assumption that adequate social controls can keep people from violence. These theories no longer look at social institutions, but make assumptions about the informal social control mechanisms that can mitigate the effects of inequality at the community or neighbourhood level. Shaw and McKay (1942) showed that

deprived communities had high crime rates over time, regardless of the coming and going of their residents. That is, crime rates seemed to be related to the characteristics of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, rather than the people living there. They argued community attributes like low economic status, residential turnover, family disruption, and ethnic heterogeneity diminished a community's potential to realise common values and exercise informal social control, monitor and control residents' behaviour, opening it up to various deviant behaviours, violence as well as youth gangs. The social disorganisation perspective generated a vast research tradition exploring the characteristics of violent communities. Nevertheless, indicators of social disorganisation, an inability to implement informal social control, need to be obtained through community surveys and proved hard to collect. Many studies focussed on social cohesion, frequently operationalised as trust between neighbours, or interactions between neighbours, both seen as prerequisites for informal social control (Krohn, 1986), rather than operationalising informal social controls themselves. Sampson and Groves (1989), in what they see as a first adequate test of social disorganisation theory because, beyond structural characteristics they include actual measures of community disorganisation (sparse friendship networks, unsupervised teenage peer groups, and low organisational participation), found that bivariate correlations between neighbourhood socioeconomic status and victimisation and offending rates in 238 British communities disappeared when controlling for these measures. They conclude that communities with sparse ties among friends and neighbours generate a weakened system of informal social control, which, in turn, facilitates crime. They continued to equate the presence of neighbourhood relationships with informal social control, without adequately testing or conceptualising the link between relationships and informal social control (Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003). Some studies have replicated these findings in different contexts (Lowenkamp et al., 2003; Nieuwbeerta et al., 2008; Sampson and Wikström, 2008), although others obtain mixed results (Browning et al., 2004; Sampson et al., 2002; Warner and Rountree, 1997). Some studies find positive, rather than the expected negative, effects of community participation and neighbour relations on violence (Bellair, 1997; Bellair and Browning, 2010). Many qualitative studies have also found high degrees of participation and networking in neighbourhoods with high homicide rates (Bottoms, 2007; Caldeira, 2001; McIlwaine and Moser, 2001; Pattillo, 1998; Wilson, 1996). More recent perspectives have developed extensions to try and account for these findings. Sampson and his colleagues (1997) developed the concept of 'collective efficacy', arguing there needs to be social cohesion, trust among neighbours, but also a willingness to work towards common goals, to prevent violence in the community. This theory moved away from seeing strong ties as a prerequisite for informal social control, through focussing on a community's willingness to implement informal social control, which may or may not be

facilitated by strong ties between residents (Browning et al., 2004). These perspectives thus no longer look at actual relationships as evidence of informal social control, with mixed support (Bruinsma et al., 2013; Morenoff et al., 2001; Sutherland et al., 2013). Another extension of social disorganisation theories, the negotiated coexistence perspective (Browning, 2009), aims to conceptualise the potentially negative effect of strong ties through acknowledging neighbourhood interaction may not only generate mutual trust and cohesion among neighbours, but also positively benefit offenders as they may be integrated in dense neighbourhood networks too. In a test of this perspective Browning et al. (2004) find that the regulatory effects of collective efficacy on violence are substantially reduced in neighbourhoods characterised by high levels of network interaction and reciprocated exchange. All these perspectives uncritically assume people's relationships, and informal social control mechanisms, are contained within geographical communities.

Social control theories are the individual-level extension of social disorganisation perspectives. These theories are not actually theories of social control, but theories of crime (including violence). They assume everyone has the potential for violence, but try and explain why people do not. They hypothesise that violence results from an absence of bonds ('attachments') that tie people to their community and conventional society (Hirschi, 1969). In their 'general theory of crime', Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) move away from controls in people's environments to the concept of self-control. They suggest early attachments, particularly to parents, instil people with the ability to control their impulses, which refrains them from engaging in violence. Gender differences are explained through diverging socialisation patterns, these perspectives assume that women are kept under closer supervision by their significant others, they are watched more carefully and thus less free to engage in violence (Rodríguez, 2010). In comparison to the evidence for strain and relative deprivation, there is slightly more consistent evidence for social control theories at the individual level, using self-report data. The absence of family and other bonds to conventional society are often seen as important risk factors, which mediate the relationship between social structural characteristics and violence (Hoffmann, 2003; Lanctot and Smith, 2001; Maimon and Browning, 2012; Marcus, 1996). Thomas and Shihadeh (2013) and McCall et al. (2010) have shown that young people who are not enrolled in school or college, and not in the labour force are more likely to engage in violence. Boers et al. (2010) on the basis of a panel study of German adolescents show how certain social milieus are the distal factors that predispose adolescents to violence, via more proximate effects of social bonds and exposure to hedonistic norms. Many studies, including in Venezuela, also find evidence for self-control, people that are more impulsive and value short-term gratification over long-term

benefits, are more likely to engage in various deviant behaviours (Morillo et al., 2011; Pratt and Cullen, 2000; Rodríguez, 2010).

### **2.3.2.3 Discussion**

Critics argue these perspectives are a-historical in ignoring the wider institutional context, particularly formal social control institutions, and embedding responsibility for violence firmly in violent communities and people (Collins, 2009; Kubrin and Weitzer, 2003). Even theories that explicitly incorporate the functioning of institutions argue that ultimately an absence of conventional institutions has the effect that people are not adequately constrained from violence, these are normative assumptions about the superiority of these conventional institutions, norms and values, that see violence as a maladaptive trait of unrestrained people. It is also difficult to evaluate the causal direction of these assumptions; whether social disorganisation and a lack of institutions and social bonds lead to violence, or whether violence diminishes a community's capacity to get together and exercise informal social control, undermines institutions or an individual's bonds with society (McIlwaine and Moser, 2001; Messner et al., 2004). Further, these theories do not explain how (informal) social control works, the mere presence of conventional institutions or relationships is often seen as evidence of (informal) social control. In the next section I explore theories that depart from normative appraisals of conventional institutions and informal social control, by looking at the actual relationships in which institutions and social control emerge.

### **2.3.3 Violence as social organisation and social control**

*The wise have long taught that there is no such thing as an unambiguous human good. Like everything else people value, strong ties have an aspect that many would regard as less attractive. Violence is the dark side of community.*  
(Cooney, 1998, p.149)

A different set of theoretical explanations challenges the core assumptions of previous theories, through looking at the relationships in which violence and violent identities emerge. These perspectives challenge the long-engrained paradigm of the rational, utility-maximising offender. They see violence not as maladaptive behaviour that is a function of the weighting of constraints versus motivations, but as providing meaning in interaction and even social control itself. They turn traditional person-centred research on its head, looking at the actual structure of relationships that produces violence.

### **2.3.3.1 Differential social organisation**

Almost 70 years ago, Sutherland (1947) proposed a differential social organisation theory, arguing that identity groups can form around criminal activities just like others form around non-criminal activities, but this concept found little following in criminology (Morselli, 2009; Triplett, 2014). A growing body of work has picked up on these ideas by seeing violent identities not merely as providing meaning in contexts of material deprivation, but as institutions in and of themselves, forms of social organisation that prescribe rules and norms in interaction (Lea, 2004; Tilly et al., 1985). Masculinity theories see violence as ‘doing gender’, conveying (hyper)masculinity as a response to a lack of other opportunities for achieving status and respect, but shaped in interaction, they attain meaning in opposition to feared, weak and female identities (Messerschmidt, 2005; Vigil, 1988). They do not see people as entirely defined by masculine identities, yet conceive of its adoption as situationally contingent. Gang theorists in particular have conceived of gangs or violent youth groups as street institutions (Hagedorn, 2008). Where traditional institutions are lacking, the street becomes an institution, instilling its own values and norms that are orientated towards being tough. These perspectives often explicitly address the absence of formal social control, suggesting that violent identities, in absence of formal institutions, can be seen as ‘governance from below’ (Lea and Stenson, 2007). A conceptualisation of violent identities as governance systems is also prevalent in political economy and anthropological traditions that explain how these identities negotiate and fill the spaces left by states that cannot claim a legitimate monopoly over violence (Cohen et al., 1981; Koonings and Kruijt, 2004; Tilly et al., 1985). These perspectives make an argument similar to perspectives that stress the absence of conventional institutions. However, they suggest violent identities are not a maladaptive response to disorder generated by an absence of state, on the contrary, they are emergent forms of social order.

Primary research that has evaluated violent identities as social organisation and governance, is scarce but gaining prominence. Authors that study political violence and insurgencies have frequently conceptualised of rebel groups as governance structures emerging in the institutional voids left by neoliberal states (Cramer, 2006; Reno, 2000; Richards, 2005). ‘Neither war nor peace’, a collaborative project lead by Dowdney (2005), looks at youth involved in non-state armed violence in 11 different countries of the global South. The organisation of these non-state armed actors is part of their definition, describing them as ‘children and youth employed or otherwise participating in organised armed violence where there are elements of a command structure and power over territory, local population or resources’. Violent identities are seen as



armed organisation in conditions of poverty and state corruption. Vigil (1988) devotes considerable attention to the construction of violent masculinities in opposition to feared identities on the basis of ethnographic work with Chicano gangs in LA. He argues that young boys growing up among multiple deprivations, and an abundance of feared, female role models are socialised by the street. The street becomes an institution where others fail. Hagedorn (2008) based on his own work in Milwaukee and Chicago and a review of global research, similarly describes how violent youth groups institutionalised the world over in the social vacuums left by neoliberal policies. Venkatesh (1997, 2006), based on ethnographic research, describes in great detail how the informal structure of a Chicago ghetto flows almost seamlessly into the informal organisation of the Black Kings, a drug dispensing gang. Arias (2009) similarly describes the institutionalisation and informal organisation of gangs in Rio de Janeiro. Willis (2009) shows how gangs in São Paulo, Brazil have institutionalised to take over some of the state's monopoly on violence and crime control. In Venezuela, Pedrazzini (2009) explores the meanings of *el malandreo* in a postcolonial world. In an article with Sanchez (1996) he explores the complex relationships of 'urgency' that tie the *malandro* to the *barrio*. They shift the focus from exclusion to how *malandros* generate inclusion; different rules and models of solidarity.

A number of perspectives have looked at how these differential forms of social organisation may be more conducive to violence through exploring the actual relationships in which violence emerges, I discuss them below.

### **2.3.3.2 Self-help, violence as informal social control**

Black's theory of social control (see also 2.2.2) focuses exclusively on the micro-level structure of relationships to explain violence, as a form of informal social control (Black, 1983). Black's proposition for a pure sociology (1995) aims to rid sociology from all psychology. He takes issue with perspectives that look at subjective and internal states to explain behaviour, suggesting all behaviour can be explained by its location in 'social space'. Violence too can be explained by aspects of the interaction, not the internal motives of its antagonists, its shape and form depend on social distance between perpetrator, victim and any third parties. He argues violence is self-help, a confrontational strategy of social control, where the structure of relationships is less favourable to other forms of conflict management, such as avoidance and settlement. This is the case in particular where people are densely connected and cannot easily avoid conflict nor turn to authoritative third parties to resolve it. Similarly, Gould (2003) argues deadly violence is a product of relationships where a formal hierarchy is not established. It is more likely among people that are relatively equal in social status, and have not established a dominance pattern,

balance of power, between them. Collins (2000) suggests violence is a form of situational stratification, it imposes a hierarchy in situations of status ambiguity. As in other perspectives, status and power are important concepts, but these authors make an important distinction; ambiguous status rather than a perceived lack or loss of status is more likely to lead to violence. They stress similarity, rather than material differences between people. This is a departure from previous theories that assume violence is a result of an inability to achieve one's goals or a struggle for respect among material deprivations. Struggles for respect occur across the social spectrum (also among higher classes) but they are resolved differently according to the types of relationships in which they occur. Informal social control, including violence, is more likely among lower-classes, not because they are more likely to feel disrespected because of material deprivations or lack adequate controls, but because the structure of their relationships is more conducive to confrontational conflict. Rather than mitigate violence through generating informal social control, these perspectives suggest that dense ties may generate violence, because avoidance is more difficult where people are densely connected, but also because status and honour are more important. Again, this is not because of a lack of material resources, but because, where people can easily find out what you do, responding to status challenges is more important for your future reputation. Conflict is seen as a normal aspect of dense ties and an abundant social life; violent resolution is particularly likely where authoritative third parties and established rules for deference are absent, changing or vague (Tilly, 2007). These perspectives thus also acknowledge the absence of formal social control mechanisms with an important distinction, an absence of formal social control is not seen to free people to use violence, rather make informal social control more likely.

A number of studies have explicitly looked at violence as self-help or social control. Baumgartner (1988) develops a theory of moral minimalism on the basis of her extensive study of a middle-class suburb in the US. She studied this community for its apparent absence of violence. She argues there is plenty of conflict in this suburb too, yet people lead lives in which they can easily avoid confrontation. Further, they turn to authoritative third parties, such as community ministers or psychologists, and in last instance, the police to resolve any conflicts that cannot easily be avoided. The structure of people's relationships in the suburb thus allows them to avoid confrontational social control. Cooney (1998, 2013) draws on a wide range of data from other studies to support his argument that societies that have many homicides usually have strong community and frequent interaction. He identifies proximity, sociability, immobility, publicity and loyalty as characteristics of interactions in violent communities. Gould (2003) similarly draws on secondary data on conflicts as diverse as vendettas in Corsica, homicides in the US and

tribal violence in Kenya to show deadly violence is much more likely between people that are similar in status. Phillips (2003) tests Black's model of violence as confrontational social control on the basis of interviews with prisoners in Texas. Comparing conflicts that ended in aggression and conflicts that did not, he finds only limited support for Black's theory. Violence is indeed more likely between people that are not dependent on each other, but he does not find that conflicts between people equal in social standing are more likely to lead to violence. Norris et al. (2006) in a comparative study of the use of force by police officers in Mexico, Venezuela and the US, find that police officers' inclination to use force is defined by the behaviour of fictional arrestees rather than their status. In other words, police officers' reactions were not defined by social structural aspects of the interaction, but by behaviour in the interaction, questioning Black's theory that all behaviour can be explained by its location in social space.

### **2.3.3.3 The reverse effects of violence**

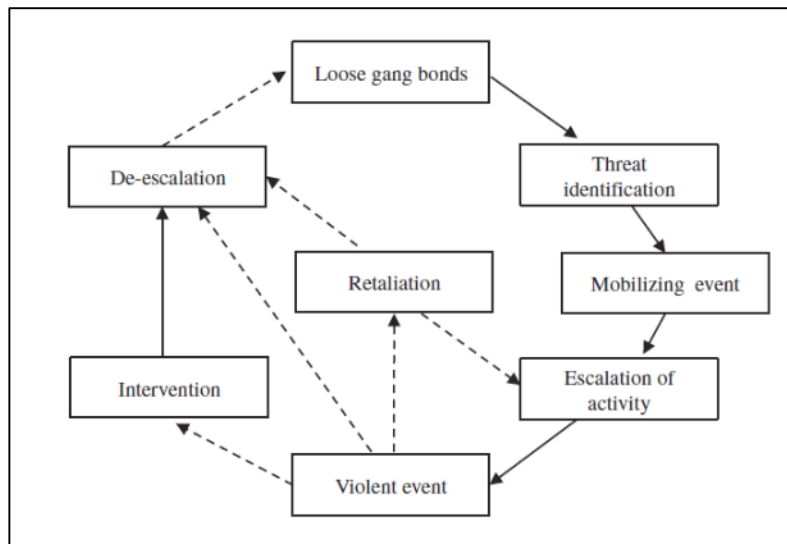
Where Black argues violence can be analysed and understood devoid of all meaning, other researchers attempt to incorporate meaning in their study of the actual interactions in which violence occurs. Fagan and Wilkinson (2007), explaining gun violence in particular, argue gun behaviours generate an 'ecology of danger', a complex environment where fear and deadly violence spread quickly. Their social contagion<sup>14</sup> theory explains how fear and gun behaviours spread through dense networks of more or less susceptible people; gun behaviours generate scripts and expectations whereby gun violence becomes the norm to respond to previous violence (Fagan et al., 2007). Drawing on Burt (1987), and similar to previous theories, they suggest 'structurally equivalent' positions, where people are similar in status, facilitate the diffusion of gun behaviours. These perspectives similarly look at the actual relationships through which violence flows, but attribute additional explanatory power to previous violence. Prior exposure to violence through rumour or actual interactions is seen to provide scripts for future behaviour. Similarly, gang researchers have looked at interactions within and between gangs to explain the violence gangs use. However, they equally depart from Black's assumption that all behaviour can be explained solely by the structure of relationships, through taking into account the norms that are learned from previous interactions. Group process theories investigate how retaliatory violence between gangs reproduces gang group boundaries and facilitates conflict spirals. Gang violence generates a normative structure by which violence becomes an expected

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<sup>14</sup> This is perhaps an unfortunate metaphor that compares the spread of violence with the spread of disease. This continues the criminological 'illness' (going back to 19th century skull measurements) of seeing the delinquent as 'ill'. Talking about gang violence as if it were a medical condition that infects susceptible individuals muddies the waters. Gang members are not ill, they respond to interactional cues. Although I think diffusion may be a better word, I will use contagion to connect with the extant literature.

response to threats (real or perceived), fosters group cohesion and ultimately legitimates the gang itself (Decker, 1996; Hennigan and Spanovic, 2012). Figure 2-2 shows this 'cycle of gang violence' (Decker et al., 2012); loose gang bonds are mobilized through the identification of a threat, which leads to a violent event, that often reinitiates the process and results in counter-retaliation.

**Figure 2-2 The cycle of gang violence ((Decker et al., 2012)**



**Note: Solid lines represent expected pathways; Dotted lines represent potential pathways.**

Thrasher (1927), often seen as a pioneer of gang research, described early on how conflict between gangs in Chicago consolidates and strengthens individual gang groups. Papachristos (2006, 2009) has looked at the contagion of deadly violence in gang networks, also in Chicago. Crucially, he has access to victim, motive and perpetrator data on homicide and is able to construct a network of deadly interactions between gangs. He shows how just a few gangs account for the majority of these homicides, through retaliation and counter-retaliation. He concludes that gang homicide is not so much the outcome of the differential distribution of individual attributes as it is 'an interaction governed by patterns of social relations between people similar in stature and status' (Papachristos, 2009, p.75). Zaluvar (2001) describes the links of Brazilian gangs to the informal economy. She sees their organisation as 'horizontal reciprocity networks' that lack strict hierarchical structures but efficiently link various shanty towns and facilitate the trade of drugs, guns and counterfeit products, but also the spread of violence. In Venezuela, Bolivar (2012) gives an insightful historical account of el malandreo in his own Caracas' barrio. He shows how malandro groups consolidated over time, describing an evolution from malandros as more or less solitary protectors of the barrio, to small groups of youth that generate deadly conflict between different sectors within the same barrio. Bolivar thus observes

the territorialisation of his barrio, people of one sector can no longer freely enter another. Over the decades conflict changed from being a personal affair to being socially ascribed, a group characteristic, based on territory and conflicts with other gangs; violent conflict and rivalries started to shape the gangs and reproduce their violence.

#### **2.3.3.4 Discussion**

These perspectives make fundamentally different assumptions to perspectives discussed under 2.3.2, which suggest strong, dense ties can keep people from violence, suggesting instead that strong, dense ties can make violence more likely. There are subtler distinctions with perspectives that assume violence generates meaning where people's status is challenged in material terms (2.3.1). More relational identity theories look beyond the material distribution of resources, at the wider structure of relationships to evaluate how violent identities are shaped in interaction and provide not just existential meaning but also social organisation. In Black's conception, violence also stems from status challenges, but its meaning is irrelevant, arguing that it can be explained solely by structural aspects of the interaction. Further, status similarity and ambiguity are more important than status differences. In social contagion theories, structural equivalence or similarity, also facilitate the spread of violence, but the meanings generated through violent interactions (rather than material deprivations) are crucial in explaining the spread of violence. In these perspectives, the meaning of violence does not stem from status differences, but from rumour and expectations garnered in previous interactions. Nevertheless, these interaction-level studies are more challenging because, as described above, data on violent interactions are difficult to come by.

### **2.4 Summary and motivation for a network approach, conceptualising the role of people's relationships**

In summary, the quantitative evidence on a relationship between inequality and violence is not as consistent, nor easily interpretable, as is often assumed. Aggregate correlations between homicide rates and Gini coefficients do not accurately reflect the mechanisms discussed above. Most of these perspectives make assumptions about how people's relationships mediate or mitigate connections between inequality and violence. People's relationships are seen to generate motivations, instil control mechanisms, or make violence a likely form of conflict management. Table 2-1 summarises the assumptions of these theories. It also summarises empirical evidence and translates these assumptions in terms of people's networks and relationships.

**Table 2-1 Summary of theoretical assumptions, empirical evidence and network operationalisation**

| <b><u>Theoretical assumptions</u></b>  | <b><u>Empirical evidence</u></b>   | <b><u>Network operationalisation</u></b>   |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Anomie / Strain;</b> blocked opportunities generate strain and can lead to violence   | Often uses abstract boundaries to approximate people's opportunities and reference groups<br><br>Inconclusive, not often adequately tested | People's relationships provide them with access to jobs and other material opportunities <sup>15</sup>                     |
| <b>Relative deprivation;</b> comparison with a reference group generates expectations and strain if expectations do not match opportunities                                      |  | People's personal networks, the people they interact with, can be conceived as a more meaningful reference group           |
| <b>Subcultural identity/ Masculinities;</b> material deprivation can lead to identification with violent identities that provide symbolic and existential meaning in interaction | Strongly supported by qualitative research   | Violent identities and masculinities provide meaning and distancing from feared identities                                 |
| <b>Social disorganisation/ Social control;</b> people's relationships instil informal social control mechanisms that can constrain people from violence                          | Research often finds high-violence communities have strong ties<br><br>Control theories often supported at the individual level            | Strong, dense ties in people's communities and /or networks provide informal social control                                |
| <b>Self-help;</b> violence is informal social control where formal social control is absent and avoidance difficult  | Supported by descriptive research, not supported by quantitative research  | Strong bonds to relative equals can generate violence where there is little chance for avoidance or third party settlement |
| <b>Social contagion;</b> interactions instil expectations for future behaviour, violence spreads quickly where people are densely connected to similar others                    | Supported by qualitative and network research  | Similarity makes diffusion more efficient  |

Anomie, strain and relative deprivation theories suggest a disjunction between people's opportunities and expectations, an inability to achieve positively valued goals, generates motivations for violence. Empirical evidence remains inconclusive, because it is difficult to operationalise this disjunction. This is the case in particular for relative deprivation theories which suggest expectations are generated by comparison to a reference group. This thesis suggests that personal networks, the people one interacts with, can be seen as more concrete sources of people's opportunities, as well as their expectations, a concrete reference group.

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<sup>15</sup> Also referred to as 'social capital', although this term is highly contested and I do not use it in this thesis.

Negative comparison to this reference group could lead to relative deprivation and violence. Subcultural identity and masculinity theories suggest violent identities provide existential meaning in contexts of deprivation. They have received strong support in qualitative research. This thesis engages with more relational interpretations of these theories that suggest violent identities attain meaning in interaction, by looking at the interactions and relationships embedded in people's personal networks. Social disorganisation and social control theories make assumptions about the strength and density of people's ties, and their presumed effects on informal social control, suggesting strong, dense ties can keep people from violence and mitigate the effects of inequality. Nevertheless, studies that look at people's actual relationships at the neighbourhood level often find strong ties in violent communities. Self-help theories suggest strong ties and dense networks may provoke confrontational conflict resolution through violence, particularly where third party resolution is unavailable. These perspectives suggest the effect of inequality on violence depends on actual relational structures, where inequality is expressed in dense interaction networks, more violence might result. Finally, social contagion theories also make assumptions about the structure of relationships, suggesting violence flows more easily through dense networks of relative equals. The effect of strong, dense ties is particularly contested in these latter theories. Self-help and social contagion theories suggest they may lead to more violence under certain conditions, whereas social disorganisation and social control theories suggest they have a positive effect in keeping people from violence. This thesis looks at people's personal networks as concrete indicators of their relationships to evaluate whether they can be seen to provide informal social control or generate violence.

This overview suggests that looking at people's interactions and relationships can teach us a great deal about how inequality might be related to violence. Venezuela shows little evidence inequality is related to violence on aggregate levels (see Chapter 1). This thesis thus focuses on people's relationships to evaluate whether these can shed light on any connections between inequality and violence over and beyond aggregate indicators, and clarify the assumptions of these perspectives. The fact that aggregate indicators of inequality and violence do not correlate in Venezuela could be because people are still motivated to use violence by their interaction networks, because the informal social control mechanisms in these networks are inadequate, or because the structure of their relationships, rather than the material distribution of resources, is conducive to confrontational conflict.

Personal network research, because it focuses specifically on people's interactions and relationships can help clarify some of these debates. Diverse personal networks have been

related to a variety of positive outcomes such as jobs (Granovetter, 1973), social mobility and integration (Lubbers et al., 2010; McCarty and Molina, 2010), household welfare (Grootaert et al., 2004), poverty reduction (Marques, 2012) and even better mental and physical health (Smith and Christakis, 2008; Wellman and Gulia, 1999), but have not frequently been used in research on violence. Studies on personal networks in Latin America have found the personal networks of the poor to be highly localised, with bonding but little linking ties, again, they were not linked to violence (Espinoza, 1999; Marques et al., 2009; Wellman, 1999).

Various studies have looked at whole school networks to evaluate the spread of violence. They get people to pick their friends from a list of other students, and often find that adolescents who pick violent friends are also more likely to engage in violence themselves (Dijkstra et al., 2011; Faris and Ennett, 2010; Haynie, 2001; Haynie et al., 2006; Megens and Weerman, 2011; Weerman, 2011). These studies do not take into account friends or significant others that do not attend school (Carrington, 2011). Others have evaluated the structure and flow of information and violence within whole criminal networks (Morselli, 2009; Morselli et al., 2007) and gang networks (McGloin, 2005; Papachristos, 2009; Sarnecki, 2001; Tita and Radil, 2011). Because whole networks look at interactions within a well-defined boundary, they are unable to link these patterns to community interactions and macro-level structures. They cannot evaluate how these interactions may affect connections between inequality and violence.

Only a few studies known at the time of writing have explored the personal networks of people involved in violence. None of these have looked at how people's relationships might induce strain and relative deprivation. Fleisher (2005) looks at the personal networks of gang members and finds them to be much more diverse and gang group boundaries much more flexible than he would have expected based on ethnographic observation data. He argues for the integration of both types of data in empirical research. Reid (2013) evaluates personal friendship networks of prisoners within correctional facilities in the US. She distinguishes three types of network structures and finds that these structures influence institutional misconduct. Two studies compared these networks to networks of people that had not been involved in violence. De Cuyper et al. (2013) find that prisoners, prior to incarceration, had a network similar to or even better with respect to network structure (denser networks) and relationship quality (more frequent contact with the people in their networks) compared to the general Dutch population. However, prisoners' network members lacked socioeconomic resources. Roman et al. (2012) evaluate the personal networks of 147 youth living in a Latino neighbourhood in Maryland. They show that youth are highly connected to people from the neighbourhood but find no significant



structural differences between the networks of people that have been involved in delinquency, violence or gangs and those that have not.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that the evidence for a relationship between inequality and violence stems predominantly from macro-level correlations, but the exact mechanisms responsible for these correlations remain debated. This thesis contributes to this literature with an appraisal of the lower-level mechanisms, particularly people's interactions and relationships, that are said to influence correlations between inequality and violence. It is qualitative and exploratory rather than quantitative and hypothesis-testing. It explores how people's relationships might influence any connections between inequality and violence through exploring the boundaries that define people's daily experience of inequality, and evaluating how their interactions and relationships may contribute to violence. Further, many of the studies in this chapter have been conducted in countries of the global North, where reasonably good data are available, but the prevalence of deadly violence comparatively low. This study focuses on one of the countries where the vast majority of deadly violence is actually occurring, addressing an abundance of global North research.

Although almost all the theories discussed in this chapter have something to say about people's relationships, there is no coherent relational perspective on interpersonal violence, partly due to a lack of adequate data. In general, analyses focus on violent communities, actors and their attributes, rather than their relational structures. Thus, although many authors acknowledge the relevance of several types of relationships, actual relational approaches remain rare. A truly relational approach involves seeing violence itself as produced within interactions and relationships, rather than as a propensity of individuals. This type of approach is conceptually and methodologically challenging. Most measures of violence, even in the current paper, remain at individual level. In acknowledging the difficulty of collecting relational data on violence, the investigation starts from a more relational analysis of inequality, exploring how the structure of peoples' relationships may contribute to the patterns of violence observed in Venezuela. The next chapter starts with an evaluation of what aggregate homicide rates and aggregate administrative boundaries tell us about violence and inequality in Venezuela.

## CHAPTER 3      HOMICIDE, SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND THE LIMITS OF VENEZUELA'S POLITICAL-ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARIES

### 3.1 Introduction

Going by its homicide rate, Venezuela currently has the bleak reputation of being the second most violent country in the world (UNODC, 2014). In 2012, according to a report from the Venezuelan Ministry of Justice report, a record 16,072 homicides were registered (Reverol, 2013). This was a rise of 14% on 2011, when 14,092 murders were recorded. It represents a dramatic and more or less continuous rise since the 1980s (see Figure 3-5 on p.66). Accounting for population figures, the 2012 figure represents a rate of 54 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, up from 48 in 2011 and a temporary 'low' of 39 in 2010. Only Honduras had more homicides in 2012, 92 per 100,000 (UNODC, 2014). For comparison, the US and UK had rates of 4.7 and 1.2 homicides per 100,000, respectively. Estimates from a victimisation survey in 2009 showed a homicide rate of 75 per 100,000<sup>1</sup>.

Average statistics can be useful indicators of social trends, however, categories and levels of aggregation should be selected sensibly and knowledgeably. The above figures tell the hasty observer a tale of random and epidemic violence, a violence that does not distinguish rich from poor, old from young, 'guilty' from 'innocent'<sup>2</sup>. They feed into a generalised fear that ultimately reproduces Venezuela's contrasts, as we will explore in Chapter 8. These national figures hide crucial differences within and between alternative levels and categories of aggregation. Venezuela's deadly violence does make distinctions, but political-administrative boundaries are poor dividing lines to appreciate these. The second part of this chapter shows homicide disproportionately affects young males living in barrios, informal urban areas right across the country, and particularly those involved in the conflict networks of 'el malandreo', a Venezuelan gangster identity. Administrative boundaries do not reflect these networks very well; nevertheless they are the only readily available categorisation to make some sense of these gloomy data. As Chapter 2 argued, average homicide rates whether on the national, state or municipality level do not tell us anything about the perpetrators of this deadly violence (see

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<sup>1</sup> Stratified sample of 16,419 households were interviewed about their experiences of crime between July 2008 and July 2009. This relates to just 1% of all reported crimes. Coefficient of variation is 21% (0.95) (INE, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> A distinction that is frequently made in Venezuela with the implication that innocent people caught in cross-fire are more 'mournable' (Butler, 2006) than those already involved in violence.

2.2.1). Instead, they stigmatise high-violence communities and ignore the differences within them.

Venezuela is a country of extremes, and these aggregate numbers hide big disparities. There are dramatic differences between cities and rural areas but importantly also within cities, between higher-class areas and informally constructed barrios; differences that are not captured by administrative boundaries. I will refer to 'centre' and 'barrio' throughout this thesis, making a 'class' distinction between relatively central and serviced areas that are traditionally upper-/middle-class, and barrios that are traditionally lower-class and informally constructed. Traditionally, because income or wealth are arguably no longer the main dividing line between these classes, many people in the barrio earn good wages<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, I will explore below that the differences between barrio and centre reflect durable inequalities (Tilly, 1998) that are continuously reproduced through a lack of contact between them. They can be seen as classes in the sense that reflect multi-dimensional differences (e.g. in access to opportunities and state institutions) that are continuously reproduced in interaction.

It will be argued in chapters to follow that these entrenched and multi-dimensional differences are indeed at the basis of Venezuela's deadly violence. The many insecurities of the barrio have allowed for the institutionalisation of an informal governance system, *el malandreo*, which provides individuals with respect, identity and existential meaning in their uncertain surroundings. Nevertheless, the deadly violence *malandros*, young men that identify with *el malandreo*, use has little more to do with socioeconomic differences, rather with previous violence, fear and reciprocity as I will explore in detail in Chapter 7.

The observations in this chapter justify this thesis' focus on relational micro-dynamics over and above the aggregate indicators that are meant to reflect these dynamics.

This chapter triangulates the often limited data<sup>4</sup> from different sources in an effort to paint a more grounded, historical picture of social inequality and deadly violence. It draws on official

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<sup>3</sup> Further, this distinction is not always discernible with the naked eye; many barrios have consolidated and have a growing middle-class population. Nevertheless, the negative connotation attached to their name remains tangible. The centre of Catia, one of my fieldwork sites, for instance is lively and relatively well-served, nevertheless the upper-classes consider it barrio and do not enter it.

<sup>4</sup> Factual data in Venezuela are scattered and inconsistent, further complicating an already difficult endeavour, particularly with regards to interpersonal violence, I explore this in more detail in the methodology chapter on p. 110 and in the conclusion chapter.

data from the national statistics office (INE), central bank (BCV), police (CICPC) and health (MPPS) instances as well as lower-level data and a report on firearms kindly provided to me by the people at the Universidad Nacional Experimental de la Seguridad (UNES, 2012). It also makes use of a nationally representative victimisation survey conducted in 2009 (INE, 2010) and survey data from the longitudinal LatinoBarometro<sup>5</sup> survey. Where available, I tried to consistently use data of similar years, and 2012 data in particular as this was also my main fieldwork period. Nevertheless, this was not always possible and inconsistencies remain.

### **3.2 Urban wealth versus rural poverty and the puzzling relationship with homicide**

Venezuela is politically divided in 24 states<sup>6</sup>, 330 municipalities and more than 1,000 parishes. These are further divided in census tracts of about 200 individuals. In terms of its income distribution, Venezuela has traditionally been one of the more egalitarian countries on a highly unequal continent (ECLAC, 2011; Gasparini et al., 2009). Even though Venezuela's per capita GDP<sup>7</sup> is about a sixth of the UK and a seventh of the US, its 2010 Gini coefficient (0.39) compares favourably with both US (0.41) and UK (0.38) Gini coefficients<sup>8</sup> (World Bank, 2014).

The Human Development Index<sup>9</sup> (HDI) testifies to some of these extremes. Figure 3-1 shows a map of the municipalities of Venezuela according to their 1999 Human Development Index.

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<sup>5</sup> Chilean market research agency that conducts opinion surveys across Latin America. Sample sizes are relatively low (1,000-2,000 respondents/country), resulting in high error variances on their point estimates. Further, their questionnaire varies between waves, in what follows I often had to rely on available rather than most relevant years.

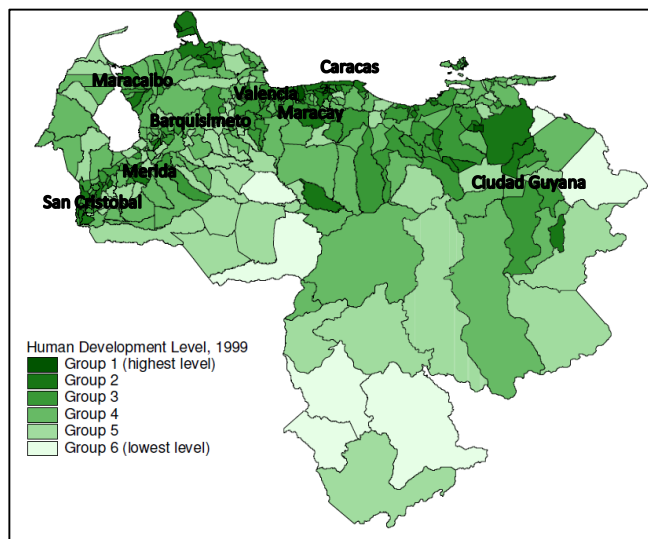
<sup>6</sup> For a political-administrative map of these states, see Figure 4-1.

<sup>7</sup> 2012 per capita GDP at constant 2005 US\$; Venezuela \$6,412, UK \$39,796, US \$45,038 (World Bank, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> The Gini coefficient is a vertical measure of differences between everyone in the country; it is not very sensitive to the polarisation of this income distribution and hides the many extremes of Venezuela's reality.

<sup>9</sup> The HDI measures Human Development as a function of Health (life expectancy), Education (literacy and school enrolment), and Income, (GDP per capita).

**Figure 3-1 Dispersion of 1999 Human Development Index, by municipality (Source: Roche 2009)**



The highest indices of Human Development are to be found around Venezuela's various urban centres in the Northern corridor and West towards the border with Colombia. Municipalities in Venezuela's Southern and Eastern, more rural, states have the lowest development levels (Gruson, 2006; Ponce, 2010). Strikingly, the HDI of the Capital District is comparable to that of France, whereas that of Amazonas compares more readily with Kazakhstan<sup>10</sup>. Interestingly, less developed states also tend to have higher Gini coefficients, or more absolute income differences between their inhabitants<sup>11</sup>. Chapter 4 will justify the selection of two fieldwork sites, one in the Capital, another in a more rural site, to appreciate these stark differences.

In contrast with empirical evidence from other countries introduced in Chapter 2, and just like the evolution of national indicators discussed in the introductory chapter, these state-level inequalities show a puzzling relationship with homicide rates<sup>12</sup>, which are lower in less

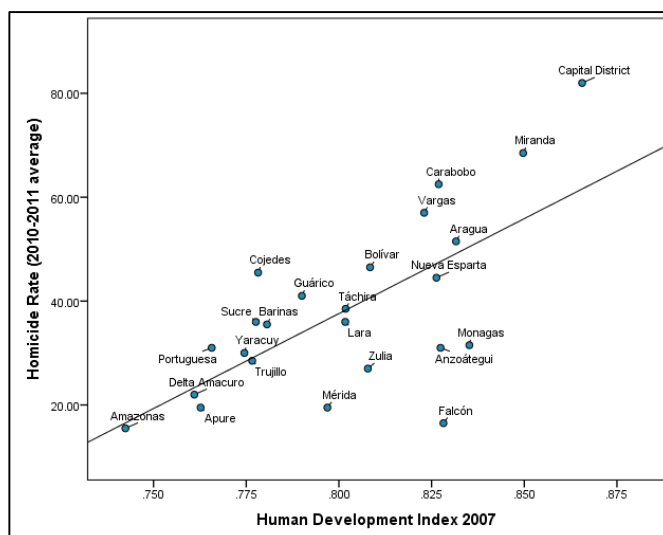
<sup>10</sup> 2007 HDI of 0.74 in Amazonas, 0.87 in the Capital District. These differences have been appeased in the last decade. In 1997, the HDI ranged from 0.53 in Delta Amacuro to 0.84 in the Capital District. Nevertheless, these vast disparities were not eradicated.

<sup>11</sup> From a visual evaluation of INE figures, it appears that rural states may be more unequal in terms of their Gini coefficient of incomes because a larger amount of poor are contrasted with a smaller amount of rich. Urban states tend to have less overall differences, but more rich opposed to relatively fewer poor. The resulting pattern of inequality is quite different.

<sup>12</sup> These rates vary substantially between states, years and data sources (see section 3.4 below).

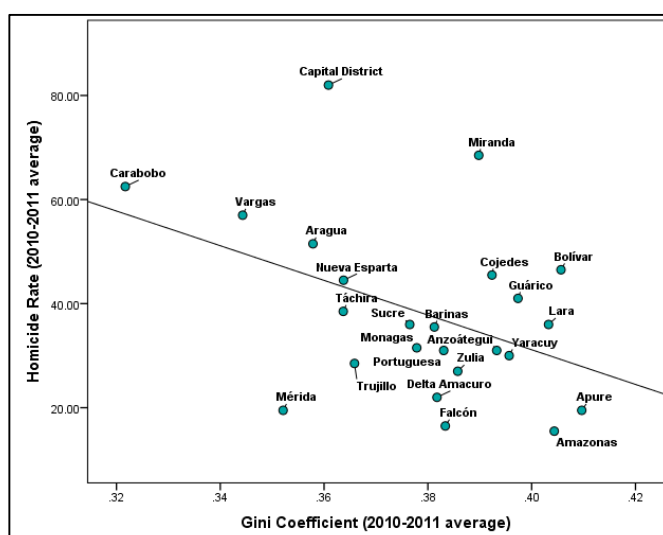
developed, more unequal states in Venezuela. Figure 3-2 shows that the 2007 state-level HDI is significantly positively correlated<sup>13</sup> ( $r=.68$ ,  $p=.00$ ) with average homicide rates<sup>14</sup>.

**Figure 3-2 State-level correlation HDI 2007 and Homicide Rates (2010-2011 average) (N=24) (Data source: CICPC INE)**



Predominantly urban states with higher levels of aggregate human development also have higher homicide rates. Further, the average state-level Gini coefficient correlates negatively ( $r=-.43$ ,  $p=.04$ ) with average homicide rates as shown in Figure 3-3 below.

**Figure 3-3 State-level correlation Gini Coefficient and Homicide Rates (2010-2011 average) (N=24) (Data source: CICPC, INE)**



<sup>13</sup> Note that, strictly statistically speaking, two time series should not be correlated as they may both reflect 'trends of time', see e.g. (Johansen, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> These are averaged for 2010-2011. Taking an average allegedly improves data reliability by avoiding year-on-year variation that is due to error rather than actual trends (Neapolitan, 1997). This practice may actually hide what is specific about homicide rates, its variation, see section 3.4 for an exploration thereof.

Even at the state level, the relationship between inequality and violence does not show the expected positive correlation. Quite the opposite, states that have bigger income differences between all residents tend to have lower homicide rates.

It is relatively easy to match data on inequality and violence at these political-administrative levels because they are more or less readily available. While these administrative boundaries do reflect some longstanding rural-urban cleavages in Venezuelan society (Briceño-León, 1992; Gruson, 2006) they hide many others<sup>15</sup>. These boundaries obscure the locally felt inequalities that are the subject of this thesis. They hide in particular a more meaningful boundary that runs right across these administrative divisions, that between informal barrios and serviced centres.

According to some sources, more than 80% of homicides occur in the barrio<sup>16</sup>, but the barrio has no administrative boundaries within or between which to calculate inequality measures. Aggregate numbers hide cleavages between the barrio and the centre, but also importantly within the barrio. To fully grasp the lived reality of these differences in chapter 5, I first delve a little deeper into Venezuela's demographic and political past and present. In what follows, I briefly explore the profound polarisation of Venezuelan society, rooted in colonial times. I then explore recent social change, which gave rise to claims of a 'Venezuelan paradox' explored in Chapter 1.

### **3.3 The origins, meaning and relative inertia of inequality**

In Venezuela's cities, the traditionally rich and poor live, quite literally, worlds apart. These two worlds, though adjacent, obtained their own logics.

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<sup>15</sup> Roche's (2009) analysis of Housing Adequacy in Venezuela looks at census tract differences in Caracas and shows how the two extremes of the index he created, top and bottom housing adequacy, live next to each other in an area of Western Caracas. These types of differences are instantly observable in real life, but masked by aggregate state, municipality and even parish-level measures.

<sup>16</sup> Many authors state this figure. In one article Zubillaga (2013) traces this to a victimisation survey conducted in 2009, where 83% of reported homicides were reported by lower-classes, nevertheless this reflects a low base size, only 1% of reported incidents were homicides.

**Picture 3-1 Office building in Central Caracas, 2012**

The traditionally well-to-do live in serviced centres. That is also where they work, go to school, shop and play. There are office buildings, schools, universities, hospitals, frequent police patrols, shopping centres and metro stations. These are not necessarily central state institutions; they are often privately or municipally funded. Many residents have expensive SUVs to

move around the insecure public spaces in between work, home and leisure. These relatively central <sup>17</sup> areas are a mix of hypermodern <sup>18</sup> office buildings (see Picture 3-1), gated condominiums and relatively quiet, tree-lined boulevards. Plazas and parks bring select groups of people together for coffee, domino, or even yoga. Police are visibly present on its streets.

The barrio traditionally houses the less well-off, mostly second and third generation internal and Latin American migrants that moved to the city in search of better lives. They constructed their houses in informal enclaves, on the outskirts of serviced centres. The city thus informally expanded into surrounding hills and wastelands. Many barrios are quite consolidated today, with neighbours that have known each other for generations and extended families building in each other's direct vicinity. In Caracas, physical limits to this expansion have led to a particular architecture, upwards rather than outwards, new generations building their houses on top of the old (Rosas Meza, 2009). Housing conditions generally deteriorate the further into the surrounding hills one ventures (see Picture 3-2). Homes often expand as the family grows –

**Picture 3-2 Zink shacks at the top of the barrio, Caracas 2012**

<sup>17</sup> The richest people also live in the mountains around Caracas, where there is little social life at all.

<sup>18</sup> At least in Caracas.



housing parents, children, cousins, nephews, lovers, in some cases acquaintances that might need somewhere to stay. Some barrio residents have motorbikes, but they do not often have cars like people in the centre. Those that work in the centre face a lengthy commute, youngsters skipping down windy staircases, the elderly boarding customised jeeps to join the flocks of commuters on heavily congested metro and informal buses. Shopping and leisure facilities have developed in these informal sectors too, though they are rowdy and chaotic in comparison to the secured shopping centres of the centre. Rubbish lines the colourful wish-wash of alleyways. Informal merchants sell their goods on the street – anything from greasy takeaways to telephone calls, pirated DVDs and mototaxi services.

This distinction between serviced centres and informal barrios is present right across more traditional administrative divisions. Almost every serviced centre has an informally constructed area in its vicinity. Even lower-level municipal and parish boundaries are not good indicators of whether they are more barrio or more centre. Aggregate income differences within or between these boundaries thus often hide more variation than they highlight similarities. In this section I evaluate the historical evolution of these boundaries, paying particular attention to recent changes under Chávez.

### **3.3.1 The short 20<sup>th</sup> century; rapid urbanisation, oil wealth and the rise of Chávez**

Latin America experienced a demographic explosion in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; its population tripled between 1950 and 2000 (Brea, 2003). This provoked massive internal migrations to the cities and rapid urbanisation of the continent. Venezuela was no exception. Until the 1990s it had one of the highest population growth rates in the world (Audain, 2014; World Bank, 2014). The 1920 census counted barely 2.5 million people; less than 100 years later, in 2011 there were 27 million (INE, 2013). The vast majority (94%) of these people live in urban<sup>19</sup> areas; Venezuela is the most urbanised country in Latin America (Bolívar, 2008). This explosive population growth was not matched by equivalent growth in state services and institutions, which were arguably weak to start with, as a result of centuries of colonial rule<sup>20</sup> and the

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<sup>19</sup> Settlements of 25,000+ people.

<sup>20</sup> The foundations of Venezuela's pattern of inequality were arguably laid in colonial times. Galeano (2004) describes how state institutions in Latin America were not based on centuries of internal contention like European institutions, they were imported by the colonisers. Mineral wealth and commodities were extracted and exported to the Spanish crown, the colonial state never had a relationship to those that maintained it. This created a 'class' of European descendants that relied on indigenous peoples and African slaves for physical labour. The discovery of oil arguably further entrenched these patterns, see footnote below.

discovery and exploitation of oil<sup>21</sup> (Coronil, 1997). The traditionally rich, often descendants of European<sup>22</sup> migrants, maintained control over the oil economy and settled in well-served centres. The traditionally poor, often internal migrants, worked their land and factories and predominantly<sup>23</sup> assembled their own housing and services in surrounding informal areas known as barrios. Relationships with an elitist state in the barrio were arguably always clientelist, exercised through co-optation of the catholic church and neighbourhood associations (Ellner and Salas, 2005). Population growth predominantly occurred in the barrio, placing already limited public services under increasing pressure. In Caracas, Bolivar (2008) tracks the population living in informal barrios from 14% in 1941 over 42% in 1978, to 56% in 2006<sup>24</sup>. Today, people are moving ever further out, expanding the barrio into various satellite cities and instigating a process of 'metropolisation' (Barrios, 2008; Pedrazzini, 1995). These developments generated a distinct pattern of inequality; contra-posing a wealthy, predominantly white, minority that controlled oil, politics and state, to a mixed-race majority that had little access to or influence over state institutions (Pedrazzini, 2008). Physical separation between barrio and centre, subsequent lack of contact and stereotype continuously reproduce these two worlds, generating a durable inequality that is not captured by the Gini coefficient.

In February 1989 these two worlds came to a violent head; a rise in transport fees on the back of prolonged structural reform and adjustments sparked the 'Caracazo', popularly known as 'the day the barrio descended'. The government violently put down the looting and protests, resulting in hundreds of deaths. Subsequent governments remained severely affected by economic turbulence, corruption scandals and largely unable to (re-)connect with the poor majority. It is in this climate of polarisation and uncertainty that Chávez –himself from the barrio– first took centre stage as a protagonist of a failed military coup in 1992. Six years later

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<sup>21</sup> Oil was discovered in the 1920s. Some authors argue that oil economies, because they are not reliant on income taxes to build state-citizen relationships, have less developed institutions, this is known as the resource curse (Di John, 2009). Di John (2009) shows how a mismanagement of oil wealth led to institutional underdevelopment in Venezuela. Further he shows how an economy too singularly dependent on oil exports generates financial distortions, as these economies heavily subject to inflation and economic booms and busts.

<sup>22</sup> In 1961, 68% of immigrants were born in Europe, compared to 11% in 2011 (INE, 2014). Migrants today are mostly Latin Americans (from Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, and Peru).

<sup>23</sup> Attempts at state construction were indeed made in oil boom periods. Perez Jimenez in the 1950s oversaw substantial construction programmes. His overthrow ushered in a period of democratic peace with two major parties signing a power share agreement known as the 'punto fijo' pact that came to an end with the election of Chávez.

<sup>24</sup> It is difficult to find exact national estimates, partly because definitions of 'barrio' vary and many informal settlements have consolidated into relatively serviced areas. Perez de Murzi (2008) contends 'more than' 50% of urban residents live in a barrio. Bolivar (2008) using 1991 data, estimates people living in a barrio at 61% nationally.

he was elected president on a platform of emancipation, poverty reduction and redistribution. It is important to remember that a figure like Chávez could not have come to power in any country – he was both a product and expression of the crystallisation of relationships into a particular constellation that gave him, and the poor he always vowed to represent, a voice (Buxton, 2005). Echoing his election slogan of 2012, he *was* ‘pueblo’, the people.

Politically, this inherited constellation was one of confrontation rather than dialogue. Chávez ratified a new constitution and soon started implementing progressive reform programmes, often using emergency decree powers<sup>25</sup> over and above the arduous road of parliamentary negotiation. In 2002, a coup attempt and national oil strike instigated by an equally determined opposition sparked important reforms of the State oil company (PDVSA) and the creation of the ‘Misiones’, social programmes that channelled food, education, housing and health care directly to the poor, that were funded directly through oil revenues rather than having to pass through the traditional state bureaucracy (Bujanda and Torres, 2008). Power to the people through participation, local organisation and governance was always a pet concern in what was dubbed the ‘Bolivarian revolution’ or ‘21<sup>st</sup> century socialism’ as Chávez veered further towards the ideological left (Ellner, 2010; Wilpert, 2011). This concern found full expression in the promotion from 2006 onwards of local community councils, *Consejos Comunales*, which can claim money for community projects directly from the central government, bypassing established local governance bodies and neighbourhood associations.

By the time of my fieldwork, these changes were in full swing. In 2012, an important election year, favourable oil prices subsidised at least two dozen different Misiones, from free basic education and health care, to considerable housing projects and subsidised food outlets. The Chávez years were also a veritable oil bonanza, oil prices grew steadily but dramatically, from \$12 per barrel in 1999 to \$105 in 2012 (Indexmundi 2014). With changes to PDVSA mentioned above, this windfall was injected into social programmes, with marked effects on a wide number of aggregate development indicators (see Chapter 1, p.4). These changes, in combination with rising homicide rates initiated claims of a Venezuelan paradox as elaborated in Chapter 1.

Nevertheless, these aggregate changes ignore the dimensions of inequality that are theorised to bear particularly negatively on violence. That Venezuelans are better off on average does not

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<sup>25</sup> ‘*Leyes habilitantes*’ which give the president the power to approve decrees without parliamentary approval in cases of national emergency.

mean they all are. Further, people's opportunities and relationships may not have changed as dramatically as their expectations. In what follows the supposed Venezuelan paradox is demystified as a case of indicator inadequacy rather than evidence that inequality does not relate to violence. Changes in the Gini coefficient do not necessarily reflect changes in people's opportunities or relationships. These observations further justify the collection of micro-level interactional data to assess the mechanisms by which inequality and violence might relate to each other.

### **3.3.2 Chávez' divided legacy: a stationary revolution?**

*All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others*

(Orwell, 1946, p.133)

This section evaluates the influence of Chávez' policies on inter- and intra-class relationships, arguing that in terms of these relationships, little may have changed.

#### **3.3.2.1 'Fatherland, socialism or death'<sup>26</sup>, the reproduction of class boundaries**

That political power changed hands did little to alleviate historical class polarisation (Woloski, 2005). The Bolivarian revolution did not build (m)any bridges between the barrio and the centre. People still live separate lives; they even speak and look different. Though Venezuela's people stress its multiculturalism and often deny racial issues, skin colour still is an indication of wealth and class (Ciccariello-Maher, 2007; Salas, 2005). It is the result of centuries of polarisation and the absence of ties between a white colonial power that settled in serviced centres and a peasant workforce that mixed with foreign slaves and built informal houses around these serviced areas. Categorical differences between criollos and mestizos institutionalised through the alignment of political and economic power along these racial and geographic lines, generating two distinct groups of people. Geographical boundaries that cross-cut the city became real over the years, attained meaning.

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<sup>26</sup> 'Patria, socialismo o muerte', election slogan used by Chávez.

Tilly (1998) called this durable inequality; when economic inequality flows along categorical lines, such as race or geography, it tends to reproduce itself through various relational mechanisms. When political power changed hands with the election of Chávez, this did not suddenly undo centuries of class relationships. Even if the bottom is now in power, it is still visibly different from the top, reflecting this durable inequality. Before the elections in October 2012, both government and opposition groups organised mass marches on Caracas, images of which are shown in Picture 3-3 and Picture 3-4, respectively. ‘Chavistas’<sup>27</sup> were disorganised, motorized, rowdy and physically bigger and darker skinned. Their march originated in lower middle-class areas in Western Caracas. The opposition marched predominantly through higher-

**Picture 3-3 Chávez supporters holding a picture of Simon Bolivar on a pre-election march, October 2012**



class areas in the East of the capital. In comparison, it was a well-organised event, with relatively white, healthy-looking people, jubilant and equally convinced of an oncoming victory<sup>28</sup>.

A physical lack of interaction (as we will see in Chapter 5) and an emotional layer of entrenched, often racial, stereotypes of the other continue to reproduce this class divide, even if incomes recently converged. People in the *barrio* are seen as ‘*marginales*’, or ‘*flojos*’ – uneducated, and lazy. The channelling of resources directly to them has not helped these perceptions. People from the centre, on the other hand, are called ‘*sifrinós*’, ‘*majunches*’ or ‘*escualidos*’ – elitist and scrawny snobs, quite literally. Taxis will not take you into

the *barrio*. People judge you, on both sides of the boundary<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> As Chávez followers are called as his incumbent, Maduro, continues the policies of ‘Chavismo’.

<sup>28</sup> This conviction can also be seen as an effect of the lack of links between *barrio* and centre; everyone in their networks, their mirror on the world, votes for the opposition. These people find it hard to grasp people vote for Chávez freely, as they often do not have contact with anyone that does.

<sup>29</sup> Mentioning in the *barrio* that I lived in a central area was often a confirmation of what my white skin spelled out long before; my belonging to a different class, a rich and wealthy elite. In the centre, my motivations were questioned, I was often criticised for supporting Chávez merely because I was doing research in the *barrio*. I will explore these perceptions and how they affected my fieldwork in more detail in Chapter 4 (p.110).

Where previous governments failed to connect with the poor, Chávez alienated the traditional upper segments. People of the traditionally upper-classes feel disenchanted by a binary discourse that excludes and stigmatises them, even from the right to a 'fatherland'<sup>30</sup>.

In all, the geographic boundaries between the barrio and the centre do retain their political and class meaning; the centre remains predominantly upper-class and unified in its opposition to 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism. Political change did not alleviate the barrio/centre divide. Nevertheless, the boundaries of the barrio themselves are not necessarily relevant indicators of wealth nor politics<sup>31</sup>. The next section looks at how recent

changes may have affected perceptions and relationships within the barrio. As Venezuela's deadly violence predominantly occurs in the barrio, inequalities within the barrio may be more important in understanding this violence.

### 3.3.2.2 The barrio; expectations, institutions and uncertainties in '21<sup>st</sup> century socialism'

The barrio today is a true Latin mix of race, tastes and convictions – some of its residents are professionals that make a very good living, and certainly not everyone supports Chávez. This section looks at how changes under Chávez may have affected barrio residents' conditions in terms of their expectations and opportunities, as well as relationships and access to institutions.

### 3.3.2.3 A revolution of expectations

A discourse of equality and empowerment has indeed affected most barrio residents' perceptions of their opportunities positively. In 2000, just 15% of Venezuelans interviewed in

**Picture 3-4 Opposition supporter holding a proud to be 'Majunche' sign on a pre-election march, September 2012**



<sup>30</sup> See election slogan to introduce this section, as well as 'los que quieren patria vengan conmigo', those who want a fatherland, join me.

<sup>31</sup> Chávez obtained 55% of the total national vote in the 2012 presidential elections, a number that reflects important geographical and class differences. According to figures from the CNE, the National Electoral Council, in upper-class areas, such as El Cafetal, and certain areas of Chacao, his opponent Capriles won over 90% (in some neighbourhoods almost 100%) of votes. In the barrio, however, support for the opposition remains, particularly among the Catholic Church and organisations that were co-opted by previous governments. In the parish of 'el 23', a well-known chavista stronghold, Chávez received a much smaller majority of 66%. He tends to get bigger majorities in poorer, rural states.

the Latinobarometro survey classified themselves as 6 or more on a scale of 1 (poorest) to 10 (richest), in 2011 47% did so. Moreover, satisfaction with life doubled from 41% in 1997 to 80% in 2011. My fieldwork data also suggest the poor felt more empowered under Chávez. Moses, a 21 year old army recruit echoed a recurrent sentiment in the barrio insisting that; ‘before [Chávez] you only counted if you had money, without money you were not worth anything’. Interestingly, he was just 7 when Chávez came to power, so it is doubtful he clearly remembers what came before. Instead, it seems that his mother and older brothers continue to remind him of the turbulent politics of the 80s and 90s where consecutive ‘elitist’ governments reneged on their election promises and implemented profound structural reform programmes<sup>32</sup>. In contrast to these times, the changes of the Chávez era are felt and welcomed by almost everyone in the barrio.

Even so, where Chávez generated a true ‘revolution of expectations’ (Salamanca, 2011), opportunities may not have followed suit. The levels of anomie and strain (see chapter 2) in the barrio, or the discrepancy between expectations and opportunities, have not necessarily reduced. Redistribution was achieved mainly through the Misiones, social programmes discussed above. They did indeed substantially improve average living conditions. Nevertheless, it is often questioned to what extent subsidised supermarkets, universal pensions, free housing and education are a continuation of paternalistic politics rather than empowerment and emancipation (Machado, 2009; Mariñez, 2010; Mundó, 2009). It is not clear to what extent people’s capabilities, and predominantly those of the poor, did indeed improve. The convergence of incomes, for instance, is reflected more in a gradual decrease in the (reported) <sup>33</sup> incomes of the rich rather than substantial increase in the incomes of the poor. In 2012, the richest 20% of the population had lost 16% of its 1997 income share, but they still owned 45% of the total income share. The income share of the poorest fifth remained relatively stable, rising from 4 to just 5% (INE, 2013). Similarly, unemployment figures halved from 12% in 1999 to 6% in 2012 (BCV, 2014), and the percentage of people working in a more secure formal sector improved from 50% to 59%<sup>34</sup>. Nevertheless, we will see in Chapter 5 that many barrio residents continue to work in informal professions, and also have little access to more secure job

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<sup>32</sup> ‘Paquetazos’. This record is strongly embedded in the collective memory of the barrio.

<sup>33</sup> These trends may be partly influenced by unreliable data. In particular, there might be a growing reluctance to accurately report incomes, in light of government discourse and policy (cf. expropriations) that is often perceived as anti-rich (Briceño-León; Spanakos, 2010).

<sup>34</sup> These data are also questioned as beneficiaries of the Misiones are no longer included in unemployment statistics (Huerta, 2014).

opportunities through their contacts. Where opportunities were theoretically opened up to all, practice does not necessarily change that quickly.

Further, the redistribution of incomes and opportunities, and access to government programmes is often seen to be conditional upon political support<sup>35</sup> (Bolívar, 2008; Machado, 2009; Riutort, 2009). Orwell's ironical quote introducing this section frequently returned during my fieldwork as people sneered; 'we're all meant to be equals but some are definitely more equal than others'. People in the barrio certainly feel better off in comparison to their past selves. However, they may feel deprived in relation to their peers, especially if those peers are seen to have benefited through mere political affiliation. It is conceivable a discourse of radical change has generated more resentment among those that have not benefited versus those that have. Against the background of this discourse of equality and state provision, there are no more excuses for remaining poor, poverty becomes an individual liability. Many people, even in the barrio, commented that people whom remain poor today, amongst these changes, do so because they are 'flojo', lazy. Where an elitist state may have absolved some responsibility for poverty in the past, a consequence of a state that works for the poor is that the poor today are blamed individually. Political empowerment of the barrio may thus have instilled a sense of entitlement that may have been absent before, potentially increasing felt inequity, resentment and strain if people's opportunities do not match these expectations. Chapter 5 will evaluate primary data on people's opportunities and expectations. They suggest many people continue to feel deprived generally, though not necessarily in comparison to their interaction groups. Further, chapter 6 will show these perceptions are not necessarily related to violence.

#### **3.3.2.4 The continuation of uncertainty and informality**

What unites the barrio in its diversity is a historical absence of formal institutions<sup>36</sup>. The Venezuelan 'state'<sup>37</sup> always intervened indirectly (horizontally rather than vertically) in the

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<sup>35</sup> Several people told me they only got their jobs in state institutions, or were not hired, after they were asked for their political affiliation. To which extent this is a general tendency is difficult to ascertain. These people were predominantly opposition supporters.

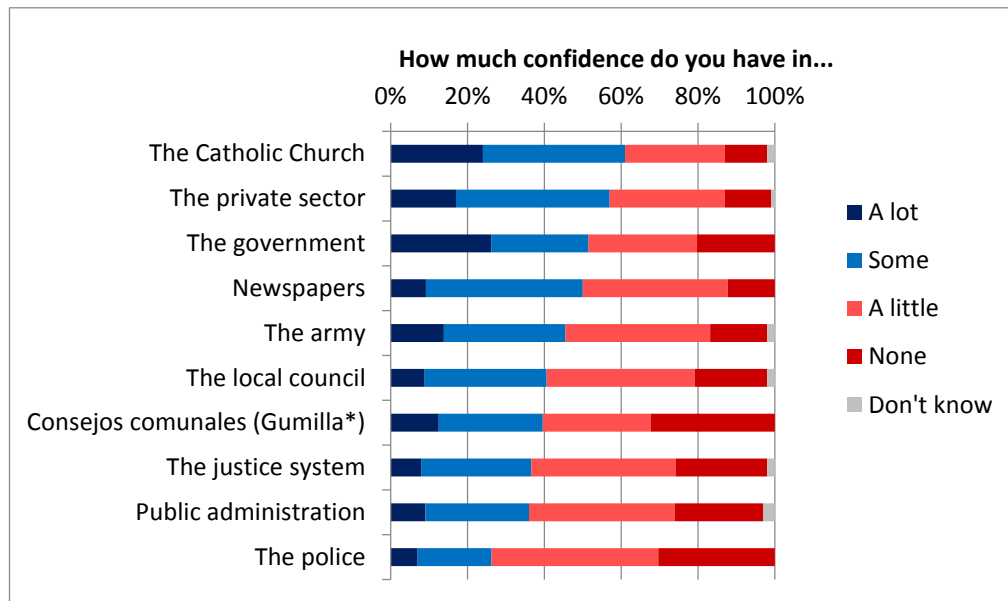
<sup>36</sup> Smilde (2005) speaks of an 'institutional vacuum'.

<sup>37</sup> I use quotation marks, as the 'state' has always been quite personally interpreted as 'the president' (Coronil, 1997). During my fieldwork period, the state was Chávez; his picture adorned building sites, hospitals and consejos comunales, as if he was personally responsible for people's well-being. The newspaper featured a section where people asked him to resolve various problems. He would often respond to these very personal requests, sometimes based on an evaluation of merit, other times much more haphazardly, e.g. the 3<sup>rd</sup> million follower of his twitter account was given a new house. Mariñez



barrio, through civil society organisations, the Catholic Church and neighbourhood associations<sup>38</sup>. It exerted influence through the co-optation of these organisations. Barrio residents predominantly rely on informal bonds and bridges for the provision of security in the broad sense of the word – jobs, services, food, health, housing and crime control<sup>39</sup>. Formal institutions are little trusted in Venezuela. Figure 3-4 shows Latinobarometro data for confidence in some institutions in 2011, with the most trusted institutions at the top.

**Figure 3-4 Trust in institutions as measured by Latinobarometro, 2011<sup>40</sup> (N=1,200)**



(2010) considers this personal relationship between the state and the people as a major impediment to development of trust in institutions.

<sup>38</sup> These organisations often provide state services, such as education, rubbish collection and public works in the barrio.

<sup>39</sup> One particular image that remains with me is quite illustrative of an on-going absence of state in health and crime control. Where Anderson (2000) describes how ambulances have difficulty negotiating the Philadelphian ghetto, in the Venezuelan barrio ambulances are not even seen. People rely on their own resources to get their wounded (and dead) to hospital. This way, one Tuesday about lunchtime, a motorbike pulled into the emergency department at one of the public hospitals in western Caracas. It carried two young men, early twenties, one grasping on to the other. As they got off the motorcycle, the shortest boy clasped his chest. I suddenly noticed the dark red stain, just above his heart, on his otherwise white t-shirt. The youngsters entered hospital staggering, only to come back out a minute or so later. There were no surgeons, or they were already busy that day. They got back on the bike, this time more weakly and desperately hanging on, the bloody stain growing bigger, as they disappeared hooting their way through traffic, in desperate pursuit of the next hospital. The police officer guarding the emergency department later told me that the boy had apparently attempted to rob a bus at gunpoint, but had been shot himself by an off-duty officer on that same bus. There had been no formal interventions – whether medical or legal. No one even seemed to blink an eye.

<sup>40</sup> Note trust in Consejos Comunales is taken from a different survey by Centro Gumilla (Salamanca, 2011) and thus not necessarily comparable. Although trust in police and church is at comparable levels to these Latinobarometro data.

The Catholic Church traditionally receives most trust, with 61% saying they have confidence in it. The police and justice system get particularly low confidence, almost three quarters (73%) say they have *little or no* confidence in the police. Impunity and judicial delays are endemic. PROVEA (2013) reports that of 48,262 prisoners in 2012, just 31% had received a sentence, and 63% were being processed<sup>41</sup>. Venezuela's various state, municipal and investigative police forces are plagued by corruption and records of human rights abuses (Red de Apoyo, 2006). Where the centre is sometimes seen to be over-policed (Antillano, 2009), the state's monopoly on violence is questioned in the *barrio* (Smilde and Pérez, 2014).

In some areas, such as 'el 23 de enero' in Caracas, infamous 'colectivos', armed revolutionary groups, manage crime control. They are quietly sanctioned by the state and take care of any wrongdoing within their territory. In el 23, the police station redundantly functions as a community centre<sup>42</sup>. Other barrios have not quite got more or less accepted informal crime control agencies – security is often a cat and mouse between *malandros* and police. These *malandros* are local boys that have grown up within the *barrio*, they are the sons and nephews of age-old friends and neighbours. They are sometimes trusted more than a historically arbitrary police force, which nevertheless is more than 90% *barrio* (Díaz and Sayago, 2012). The police are frequently referred to as 'uniformed *malandros*'. However, that formal social control is absent does not mean people are not subject to informal social control, in fact, informal social control may be more prevalent in the *barrio* than in the centre, as I will argue in Chapter 5. Further, Chapter 7 will evaluate the institutionalisation of *el malandreo* as an informal governance system that underwrites a particularly violent, deadly and contagious form of social control.

**Picture 3-5 'Misión Vivienda' construction sites with Chávez brand**



<sup>41</sup> The Venezuelan Violence Observatory states that only 9 people are detained for every 100 homicides, but it is unclear where these data were obtained. Many authors claim 90% of homicides are never solved, but they link to each other without citing a clear original source.

<sup>42</sup> A leader of one of these *colectivos* explained this evolution to me in an interview, showing me the community centre and explaining how they take care of any wrongdoing in the community.

In the last 15 years, the state moved into the *barrio* more openly, building parallel systems of governance and health. The Misiones, often branded with a Chávez logo (see Picture 3.3), substantially improved general living conditions. Housing projects relocated those that lost their homes due to floods, and a ‘revolutionary’ police force wanders a number of trailblazer *barrios* in Caracas and beyond (Hanson, 2014a). Arguably, more formal jobs (in expanding state institutions) also opened up to the people of the *barrio*.

Longitudinal Latinobarometro data suggest trust in institutions portrayed in Figure 3-4 improved recently. Nevertheless, it remains low overall and there is little evidence state institutions were strengthened (Smilde, 2015). PROVEA (2011) reports the number of demonstrations to have risen dramatically under Chávez, which it considers a symptom both of increased participation as well as a failure of institutions to resolve grievances. In fact, the *Consejos Comunales* undermined the power of existing municipal governments and neighbourhood associations, and entailed a *de facto* recentralisation of power in the president (Rangel Guerrero, 2008). Bringing health to the *barrio* arguably undermined resources of existing hospitals. The revolutionary police force is often seen, even by its own members, as weak and unable to deal with growing security concerns (Hanson, 2014b). A number of laws were revolutionary in content, but hardly implemented and had little effect on the justice system’s capacity, if not a decline in the rule of law (Smilde, 2015). Further, many initiatives lack continuity<sup>43</sup>.

The effects of these changes on people’s actual relationships, as on their opportunities explored above, seem mixed. Social change itself always involves conflict (Black, 2011) and there is no doubt the establishment of *Consejos Comunales* and other social programmes disrupted local relationships and power dynamics in many places<sup>44</sup>. Yet, Latinobarometro data seem to indicate marginally increasing levels of ‘trust’, a frequently used measure of social cohesion and informal social control (see chapter 2). General interpersonal confidence increased from 12% in 1996 to 25% in 2011. Aggregate measures of confidence in neighbours fluctuate around the 50% mark,

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<sup>43</sup> One of the opposition’s arguments is that there were 11 different ministers of justice under Chávez, but comparing the previous 12 year period there had also been 12. Again, this testifies of a continuation of old patterns rather than revolutionary change.

<sup>44</sup> Many *Consejos Comunales* are confronted with internal problems, they argue, split and reform. Two factions of one particular *Consejo Comunal* I visited had fallen out over workloads, so one of them just formed an entirely new *Consejo Comunal*, claiming a different street as their catchment area. These organisations are often distrusted as Figure 3-4 shows and I will explore in more detail in Chapter 5.

from 49% in 2003, over 68% in 2006, back to 54% in 2009. These data tell us equally little of people's interactions and relationships.

As mentioned above, access to social programmes is often seen to be politically motivated. There is at least a continuation, if not an increasing sense, of uncertainty. The lack of truly overarching rules in Venezuela has many people talk of a constant revolution or crisis, they have little idea what tomorrow will bring. This continuity of uncertainty and informality may have the most dramatic impact on violence, as we will explore in the chapters to follow. In all, Chavez' legacy, at least on institutions and relationships, may be one of continuity rather than revolutionary change (Uzcátegui, 2010).

### **3.3.3 Summary**

In summary, there is little doubt that 2012 had a more egalitarian income distribution than 1997 and that the everyday reality of many Venezuelans was transformed for the better. It is much more questionable to what extent this was achieved through the creation of jobs, the transformation of relationships or the strengthening of state institutions rather than dependent on oil revenues that funded social programmes, and a continuation of clientelist politics. In many ways, Chávez' policy was a continuation of top-down paternalistic politics rather than the implementation of bottom-up, participatory democracy (Smilde and Hellinger, 2011). Thus, the effects of inequality that are theoretically important in the aetiology of violence were not necessarily affected by reducing overall income inequality. Objective changes in the aggregate income distribution hide that people may still be motivated to become violent. Social change may have created new fault lines, within poor areas, between people that have benefited from social programmes and others that have not (Motta, 2011; Spanakos, 2010). Further, a declining Gini coefficient is no evidence there are better relationships or more informal social control on people's behaviour. Social change may have disrupted the relationships that are meant to provide social control.

Having evaluated some of the trends behind these aggregate numbers, there is little reason to suggest, as does an intuitive reading of the declining Gini coefficient, that violence should go down. Nevertheless, it is difficult to match these observations to a more or less dramatic rise in homicides. The next section shows this rise in homicide rates is not uniform. Many states, municipalities and parishes remain relatively immune to homicide, suggesting perhaps national policies and changes matter less than do local inequalities and relationships.

In all, these observations remain mostly speculations that justify looking at people's relationships in more detail. Venezuela's political-administrative boundaries tell us very little about differences between the *barrio* and the centre, or how people's opportunities, expectations and relationships may have changed. The data to accurately evaluate people's daily interactions and relationships, and how they may prevent people from or indeed motivate them to use violence, are lacking. The following chapter outlines the strategies that were used to collect these data, before analysing them in the empirical chapters that follow. First, I explore in more detail Venezuela's deadly violence.

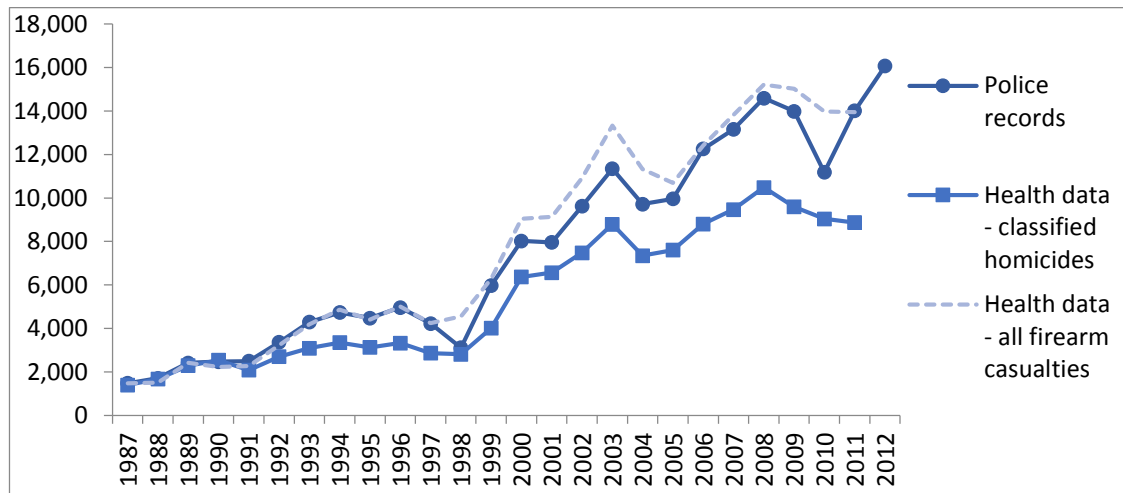
### **3.4 Homicide in Venezuela, the characteristics of deadly violence.**

The introduction to this chapter made reference to a number of statistics that lend Venezuela the sad reputation of being the second most violent country in the world. This section explores these data in more detail. It shows that homicide rates have not increased steadily or dramatically, rather they ebb and flow. Further, they do not necessarily reflect 'everyday violence', violence that expresses itself in verbal and physical aggression and more often occurs between people that know each other. The homicide rate is driven by guns and disproportionately affects young, *barrio* men. It seems to spread through interactions between *malandros*, a colloquial term for delinquents of various trades and assignations that identify with *el malandreo*, a Venezuelan gangster identity.

#### **3.4.1 The gradual spread of deadly violence**

Figure 3-5 below shows the evolution of Venezuela's homicide rate between 1987 and 2009.

**Figure 3-5 Homicides registered by police and health organisations, 1987 – 2009<sup>45</sup> (Source: MPPS, CICPC, Chacon 2012)**



It was already established that the 16,072 homicides recorded in 2012 are the most on record in Venezuela, and represent a dramatic rise since the 1980s. Nevertheless, this figure shows the last few decades have not seen a continuous rise in the homicide rate. We can identify periods of stagnation and even decline; a cumulative ebb and flow that echoes ‘boom and bust’ or even ‘rollercoaster’ patterns found in other countries (Fagan et al., 2007; Goertzel et al., 2012)<sup>46</sup>.

Further, the national homicide rate hides important variation across and within administrative boundaries. Table 3-1 shows the state-level firearm mortality rate as recorded by health

<sup>45</sup> Latest available year for health data is 2011. Note the discrepancy between health and police sources. In health statistics, ‘deaths with undetermined intent’ are recorded separately from ‘deaths due to aggression’, i.e. ‘homicide’. The former show an incremental rise since 1991, also when discrepancies start occurring. This is particularly the case in the Capital District, Vargas and Miranda, all areas served by the Caracas morgue. It is highly plausible that the policy there is to classify deaths as ‘undetermined intent’ rather than ‘due to aggression’. In 2010 for instance, only 61 deaths were classified as ‘homicide’ in the Capital District, whereas 1,994 were classified as ‘undetermined intent’. It’s interesting to note that when all firearm deaths are added together, including those of undetermined intent, accidents and suicides, the police and health lines converge, as indicated by the dotted blue line in **Error! Reference source not found.** Police homicide figures in turn, do not include ‘investigations’ nor ‘resistance to authority’. People killed in ‘legal’ (read: police) interventions are recorded separately, and thus do not make it into the category ‘homicide’. NGOs such as the Venezuelan Violence Observatory add these and a proportion of ‘unresolved’ incidents to their tally, reporting much higher homicide rates, 73 per 100,000 in 2012 compared to an official rate of 54. Homicide rates thus also reflect more arbitrary differences in definitions and recording practices. Importantly, peaks and troughs are registered in both sources, reaffirming the validity of general trends (Gabaldon et al., 2012).

<sup>46</sup> Fagan and Wilkinson (2007) studied New York homicide rates, which continued to rise along a rollercoaster pattern, each peak setting new base levels. However, New York never reached as high peaks as Venezuela’s homicide rate and finally receded in the 1990s.

instances in 1990, 2001 and 2009<sup>47</sup>, ranked by 2010 police homicide rate. Compound average growth rates (CAGR)<sup>48</sup> were calculated to measure average percentage growth.

**Table 3-1 State-level firearm mortality (MPPS) and homicide (CICPC) rates (per 100,000 population)**

| State                      | Firearm mortality rate (MPPS) |           |                |           |                | Homicide rate (CICPC 2010) |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|----------------|----------------------------|
|                            | 1990                          | 2001      | 1990-2001 CAGR | 2009      | 2001-2009 CAGR |                            |
| Capital District (Caracas) | 45                            | 74        | 5%             | 96        | 3%             | 73                         |
| Carabobo (Valencia)        | 12                            | 54        | 15%            | 80        | 5%             | 61                         |
| Miranda (Caracas)          | 18                            | 49        | 10%            | 77        | 6%             | 59                         |
| Aragua (Maracay)           | 6                             | 47        | 20%            | 61        | 3%             | 49                         |
| Nueva Esparta              | 3                             | 28        | 22%            | 67        | 12%            | 47                         |
| Vargas                     | *                             | 61        | *              | 97        | 6%             | 46                         |
| Cojedes                    | 5                             | 25        | 16%            | 42        | 6%             | 45                         |
| Bolívar (Ciudad Guayana)   | 9                             | 37        | 14%            | 55        | 5%             | 40                         |
| Guárico                    | 6                             | 26        | 14%            | 34        | 4%             | 39                         |
| Táchira (San Cristobal)    | 4                             | 14        | 11%            | 38        | 14%            | 38                         |
| Barinas                    | 5                             | 17        | 11%            | 56        | 16%            | 33                         |
| Lara (Barquisimeto)        | 6                             | 26        | 15%            | 39        | 5%             | 33                         |
| Sucre                      | 2                             | 18        | 21%            | 55        | 15%            | 29                         |
| Anzoátegui                 | 6                             | 21        | 15%            | 37        | 10%            | 28                         |
| Yaracuy                    | 5                             | 22        | 13%            | 47        | 8%             | 28                         |
| Monagas                    | 4                             | 18        | 14%            | 26        | 5%             | 26                         |
| Portuguesa (Guanare)       | 6                             | 35        | 18%            | 28        | -3%            | 25                         |
| Trujillo                   | 9                             | 21        | 8%             | 26        | 2%             | 25                         |
| Delta Amacuro              | 1                             | 9         | 14%            | 16        | 3%             | 21                         |
| Zulia (Maracaibo)          | 8                             | 34        | 21%            | 44        | 8%             | 21                         |
| Apure                      | 6                             | 19        | 11%            | 31        | 10%            | 19                         |
| Mérida                     | 4                             | 14        | 12%            | 30        | 6%             | 19                         |
| Amazonas                   | 2                             | 5         | 12%            | 10        | 5%             | 15                         |
| Falcón                     | 4                             | 14        | 8%             | 20        | 9%             | 15                         |
| <b>Venezuela</b>           | <b>11</b>                     | <b>35</b> | <b>11%</b>     | <b>53</b> | <b>5%</b>      | <b>39</b>                  |

Two important observations can be made. First, the relatively major surges in firearm violence occurred in the years between 1990 and 2001 rather than in the last decade. In 1990, many states, even some containing the urban centres, had relatively low levels of firearm related deaths. Their homicide rates all rose by substantial annual percentages between 1990 and 2001.

<sup>47</sup> This includes all firearm-related deaths recorded in health statistics. Arguably, this is a better reflection of homicides than 'homicide' category as it appears recording policy changed and health instances started recording incidents as 'unknown intent'. See footnote 45. Disaggregated police statistics are not available going back to 1990. Unfortunately these state-level health data are only available for these particular years.

<sup>48</sup> CAGR = Compound Annual Growth Rate =  $((\text{year 2}/\text{year 1})^{(1/\text{number of years})}-1)*100$

Though the absolute number of deaths is far higher in 2009 than it was in 2001, the relative rise in this decade is small in comparison. Only Táchira and Barinas saw larger average growth rates between 2001 and 2009 than between 1990 and 2001. Secondly, homicide rates are not stable within these state boundaries. States that have a high homicide rate one year do not necessarily do so the following. In fact, relative rankings fluctuate dramatically between years and data sources<sup>49</sup>. The evolution of homicide rates in the states where my fieldwork sites are located illustrates this ebb and flow (see Figure 4.3 in Chapter 4). The state of Sucre had the second lowest homicide rate in 1990 (2/100,000), it then rose by an average annual 21% moving up from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> most violent state in 2001. By 2009 it came 8<sup>th</sup> (55/100,000) in this morbid ranking. The Capital District on the other hand, only saw marginal rises but also dramatic fluctuations. Homicide rates were high to begin with, as if they reached a platform and other states are playing catch-up. Most recent (incomplete) statistics for 2012<sup>50</sup> show that homicides in the Capital District declined by 11%, from 1,957, in 2011 to 1,743 in 2012. Two states, Miranda and Carabobo, had higher levels of violence in 2012 than the Capital District (Reverol, 2013). What is certain is that all states did indeed see a substantial rise in their homicide rate since 1990, but this was more gradual in the last decade than the national homicide rate might have us believe. In absolute numbers we get the dramatic rise shown in Figure 3-5, relatively this rise has been much steadier, and scattered across various states. These observations suggest national policy may have little impact on these homicide rates.

A similar pattern can be observed comparing the 2001 to 2008 firearm related death rates<sup>51</sup> in Venezuela's municipalities<sup>52</sup> more visually in Figure 3-6.

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<sup>49</sup> This is why many authors, a.o. Messner (1992) suggest averaging homicide rates, potentially ignoring exactly what makes homicide unique, its fluctuating character.

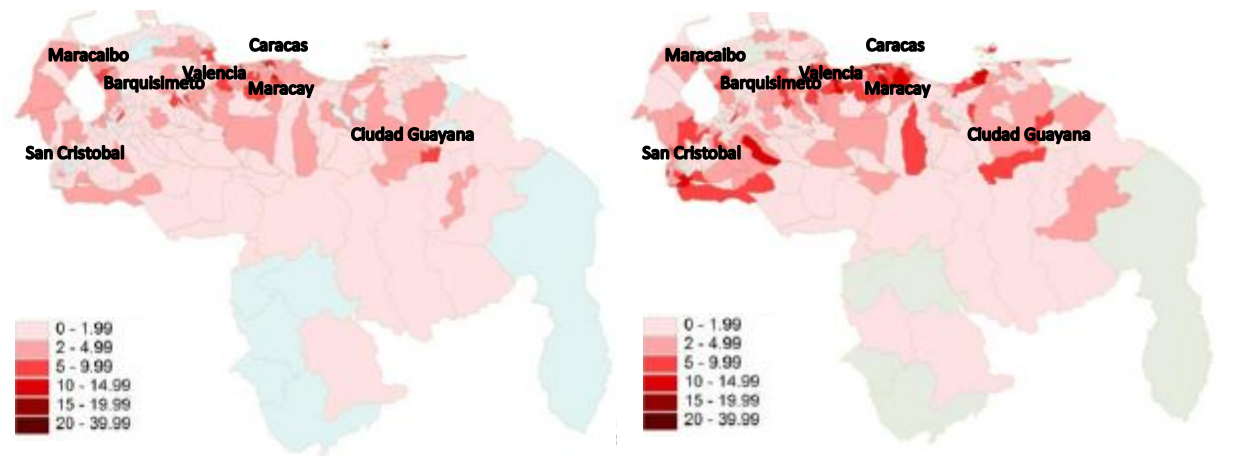
<sup>50</sup> Not shown because they were disclosed in a press release that did not have data for all states.

<sup>51</sup> Again, this includes all firearm related incidents recorded by health instances, including aggressions, suicides, accidents and incidents with unknown intent. Category created because of issues noted in footnote 45.

<sup>52</sup> For the Capital District and Vargas, lower level parishes are used, often they have as many inhabitants as municipalities.



**Figure 3-6 Municipality-level firearm mortality rates, 2001 and 2008 (per 10,000 inhabitants)**  
(Chacon et al., 2012)

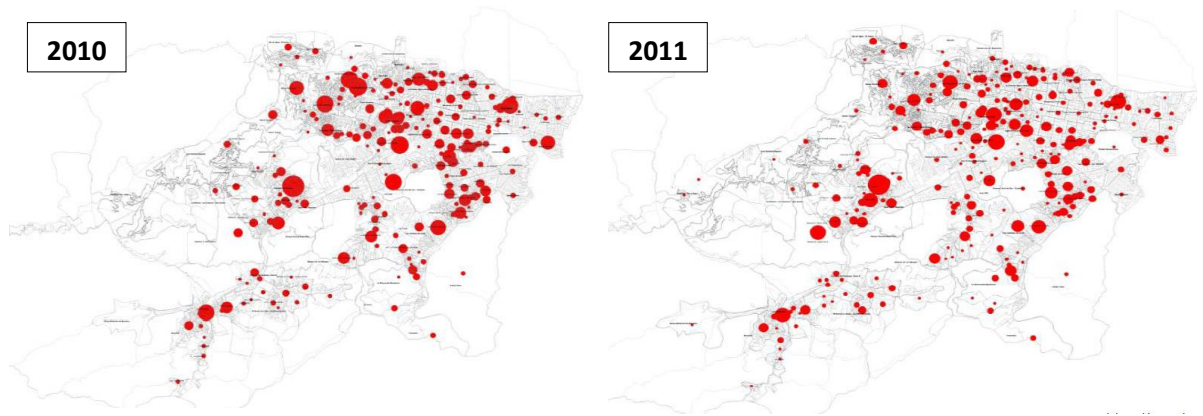


In both years, the highest levels of firearm mortality are concentrated around the urban centres of Caracas in the central north, Maracaibo towards the border with Colombia in the north-west, and Valencia, Barquisimeto and Maracay in their middle. Ciudad Guayana, an industrial town towards the south-east also colours dark red. These are also the 6 largest cities; all have more than a million inhabitants. The relatively poorer, more rural, areas of the south and east experience much less firearm-related deaths. We clearly see a pattern of diffusion and convergence between these two maps, with other regions gradually approximating the high homicide rates of the Capital District. Apart from the 6 main urban areas, the municipalities with highest homicide rates vary substantially between years of observation and data sources, they ebb and flow, show cyclical booms and busts (Goertzel et al., 2012). Some municipalities and parishes have remained relatively immune, whereas others have seen an exponential rise, accounting largely in and of themselves for national rising homicide rates. In all, it is the combined effect of the spread of deadly violence to the regions rather than ever incremental violence that seems to have produced Venezuela's rising homicide rate. Simple and sudden institutional demise under Chavez (i.e. post 1999), as scholars like Briceño-León<sup>53</sup> argue is a rather unlikely explanation of these trends.

<sup>53</sup> E.g. he mentions in a newspaper article (Correo del Orinoco, 2014 anniversary edition) homicides suddenly rose after Chávez came to power, after 5 years of 'stability'. As this analysis shows this was not generalised, nor sudden; they had been rising incrementally since the start of the 1990s and the data show subtle spread across urbanised regions rather than a sudden leap. These analyses feed into a generalised fear that further divides Venezuela.

If we disaggregate a little further, once more, we find distinct areas with high concentrations of deadly violence, where others hardly see any violence at all. Figure 3-7 shows homicides that occurred in sectors of the Capital District, in 2010, and in 2011.

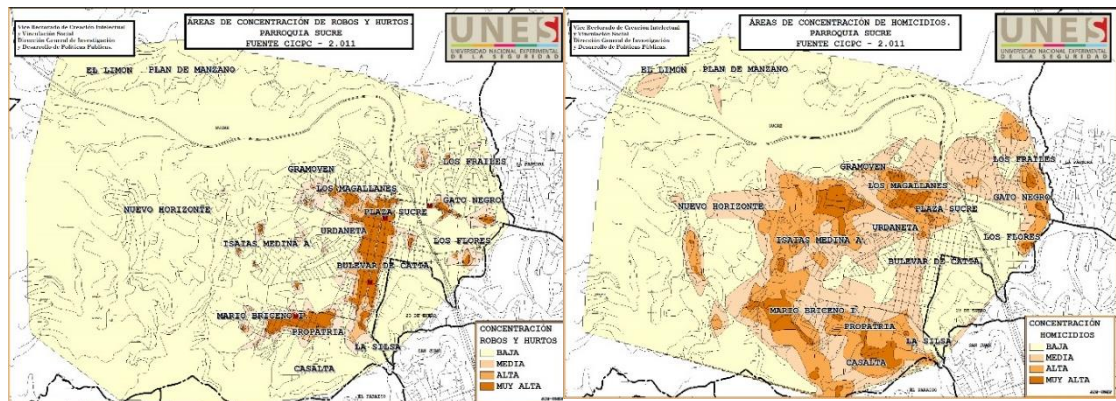
**Figure 3-7 Homicides by firearm in sectors of Capital District, 2010 and 2011 (Source: Gabaldon and Benavides (2012), based on CICPC)**



In 2011, we see many more homicides, but they appear less concentrated. In 2012 (map unavailable), two thirds of homicides occurred in 8 of the Capital District's 22 parishes. Some saw a substantive diminution. These patterns are more congruent with a dynamical interaction explanation rather than one that focuses on static essences of these areas or their inhabitants. With a little imagination, we can observe the ebb and flow from one sector to the next, as homicides incite revenge homicides in adjacent sectors. When it comes to understandings of their daily lives, local residents are often well ahead of the social scientists that study them. More often than not respondents would answer my textbook question 'Has violence in your area increased, decreased or stayed the same?' with a 'it depends, sometimes it goes up then it goes down again', or 'Sometimes it's quiet, other times its disturbed, and you never know at which time ... the youngsters here have a lot of problems in other areas that you don't know of... so... you never know really'.

Figure 3-8 aligns two geographically identical maps of Catia, the area in Western Caracas I selected for fieldwork. The left-hand map shows the concentration of property crime (robbery and theft), whereas the one on the right shows the concentration of homicide.

**Figure 3-8 Concentration of property crime and homicide in Catia, 2011. (Source: Bastidas, UNES)**



It is instantly clear that, where theft and robbery are concentrated among the more consolidated shopping area of Catia's Boulevard, homicide predominantly occurs in the informally constructed barrios that line the hills around this Boulevard. Investigation of homicide statistics at lower administrative levels in other countries often reveals the strong geographic concentration of violence in poor and disadvantaged inner-city areas (Block and Block, 1992; Land et al., 1990; McCall et al., 2010; Sampson and Groves, 1989). Again, it is tempting to match these homicide rates with structural features of these areas and/or aggregate individual characteristics of their residents. This ignores that only a small proportion of their residents, *malandros*, are possibly to a large extent responsible for property crimes, as well as homicides. This thesis argues that their motivations, at least for homicide, are not to be found in structural indicators, but in the pattern of relationships in which they are embedded. This type of violence spreads through interactions between *malandros* and the expectations for future interactions these generate. Chapter 5 shows these communities display less evidence of social disorganisation than of a vivid social life, where social control is exercised informally, sometimes by *malandros* themselves.

Geographic disaggregation of homicide statistics tells us something about patterns of diffusion and concentration, but it reveals little about the micro-level, interpersonal dynamics of violence. That violence seems to be concentrated in these areas does not imply its residents are more violent, or that their characteristics would be related to violence. Most of the poor or multiply deprived are never violent (Collins, 2009; Wikstrom and Loeber, 2000). That deadly interactions seem to have spread across the country does not mean there are more violent offenders today than there were 10 years ago, few may simply commit more crimes, or more deadly crimes. Nevertheless, most studies explain homicide rates through characteristics of the areas where

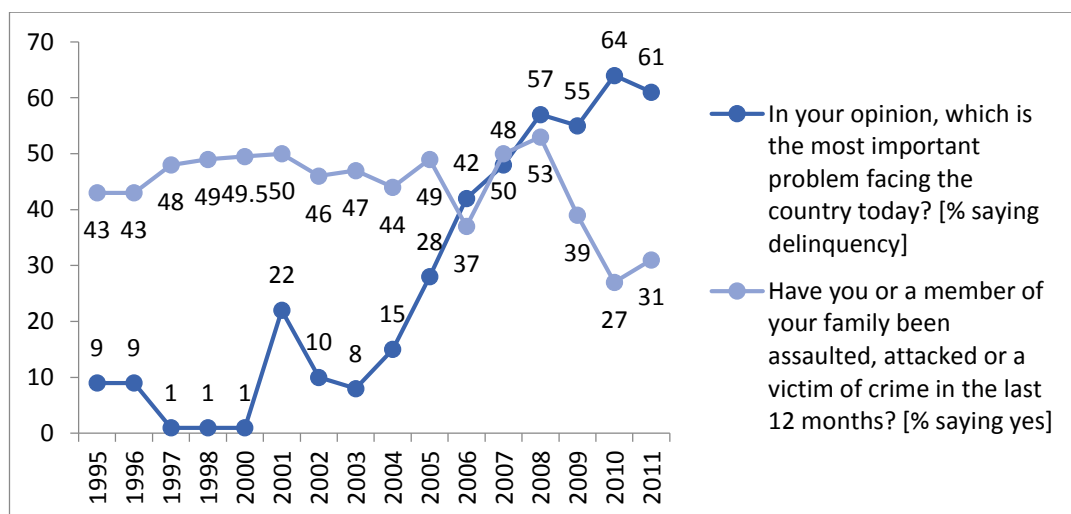
they occur, or even characteristics of their residents. Many studies thus incorrectly infer individual-level motivations from aggregate official statistics (Hojman, 2004). The next section argues these homicides do not stem from interactions between all residents, and are perhaps a bad reflection of everyday violence. They seem indicative of increasingly violent interactions between *malandros*.

### 3.4.2 The characteristics of deadly violence

#### 3.4.2.1 Public opinion

Lagos and Dammert (2012), in an analysis of Latinobarometro data, compare reports of victimisation<sup>54</sup> against perceptions that ‘delinquency is the main problem facing the country’; Venezuela stands out in Latin America for having the highest discrepancy between fear and actual victimisation. Figure 3-9 shows that reported victimisation in Venezuela was at a 25 year low in 2010-11, while people that reported ‘delinquency is the main problem affecting the country today’ reached its peak in these same years.

**Figure 3-9 Perceptions of delinquency and victimisation rate in Venezuela, 1995-2011 (Lagos and Dammert, 2012)**



Although the sample sizes are too low to appreciate whether this decline is actually significant<sup>55</sup>, these data do suggest common crime has not necessarily risen, and homicide data may not be a good indicator thereof. Further, the discrepancy between victimisation rates and fear leads the reports’ authors to conclude that the nature rather than the quantity of crime may be more

<sup>54</sup> Without distinction between types of crime e.g. with or without violence.

<sup>55</sup> The survey’s low base size (around 1,000 respondents annually) and consequent variance around parameters does not allow to conclude the victimisation rate has indeed gone down significantly.

important in shaping people's perceptions. Indeed, people's perceptions do seem to follow the evolution of the homicide rate (Figure 3-5) more closely than actual victimisation.

Homicide data feed into an imaginary of ubiquitous violence that shapes people's subjective life worlds. According to Wievorka (2009), violence has a 'dark lure', which is also what defines it best. Fascinating and repellent at once, its perceived uncontrollability plays on our innermost fears. Like disease, natural disasters and accidents, violence inhabits the realm of seemingly overpowering forces that challenge our most sacred possession, our physical integrity. Deadly violence in particular, is a relatively rare, but terrifying prospect. It calls up emotional images that shape our subjective life-worlds and interaction patterns. Objective realities of interpersonal violence in Venezuela weave into subjective realities that, in turn, reproduce violence, as Chapter 8 argues.

Contrary to these perceptions, the lethal violence that anguishes Venezuelans does discriminate. Further, it shows some distinct characteristics in comparison to the types of violent interactions criminology has traditionally analysed in the more developed nations of the global North, where comprehensive data are more readily available. It does show important parallels with a particular type of violence, i.e. gun gang violence, a violence between young men that hardly know each other, perpetrated with guns and in public places.

#### **3.4.2.2 Homicide as the dubious tip of a violent iceberg**

As discussed in Chapter 2, homicide statistics are often considered the most valid proxy for violence. Homicide is seen to be hiding a cumulative base of unreported or undiscovered incidents of interpersonal violence, by mathematical extrapolation (Briceño-León et al., 2012). Studies in the Global North indicate more severe incidents of violence are also less frequent (Collins, 2009). Nevertheless, looking at limited other statistics for Venezuela, a distinct pattern emerges. Assault data, for instance, show a relatively low frequency in comparison to homicide. In fact, as the homicide rate rises, the relative number of assaults declines. Where in 1999, the police recorded 5.3 assaults per homicide, in 2010, there were only 1.8. This in sharp contrast to other countries – in England and Wales for instance, there are around 30 assaults per recorded murder. State-level homicide and assault rates show insignificant minor positive correlations, suggesting they might reflect different underlying variables. Assault data are much more prone to reporting and recording biases than homicide statistics. Nevertheless, allowing

for substantial underreporting bias<sup>56</sup>, the discrepancy between homicide and assault data suggest violence in Venezuela is uncannily deadly.

Results from the victimisation survey shown in Table 3-2, confirm the deadliness of Venezuela's violence, with less than 3 assaults for every homicide.

**Table 3-2 Crimes reported in 2009 victimisation survey (INE, 2010)**

|  | <b>% of all<br/>reported<br/>crimes</b> | <b>National<br/>rate per<br/>100,000</b> | <b>Caracas<br/>rate per<br/>100,000</b> |
|--|---|--|---|
| <b>Homicide</b>  | 0.98                                    | 75                                       | 233                                     |
| <b>Threats</b>   | 5.74                                    | 482                                      | 412                                     |
| <b>Assault (with result in injury)</b>                         | 3.24                                    | 272                                      | 429                                     |
| <b>Sexual assault</b>  | 0.39                                    | 33                                       | 43                                      |
| <b>Robbery (theft with force or immediate threat of force)</b> | 60.42                                   | 5,076                                    | 8,951                                   |
| <b>Kidnapping</b>  | 1.14                                    | 95                                       | 203                                     |
| <b>Extortion</b>   | 0.84                                    | 71                                       | 57                                      |
| <b>Corruption</b>  | 2.09                                    | 175                                      | 108                                     |
| <b>Theft</b>   | 20.64                                   | 1,734                                    | 2,020                                   |
| <b>Fraud</b>   | 4.61                                    | 387                                      | 370                                     |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | 2,364,452                               | 8,401                                    | 12,826                                  |

It also stands out that robbery<sup>57</sup> is much more frequent than common theft. Over three fifths (60.4%) of reported incidents were robberies, whereas only 20.6% were thefts. This difference is not quite as pronounced in police statistics<sup>58</sup>, where reported robberies fluctuate around similar numbers as reported thefts. It does challenge a pattern in countries of the global North, where theft is much more common than robbery. The vast majority of homicides as well as acquisitive crimes are committed with firearms, which could partly explain a relatively lower prevalence of assault and theft.

<sup>56</sup> In the 2009 victimisation survey, 59% of victims of assault said they did indeed report it to the police, a relatively large number compared to common theft, which 22% of victims said they reported. There is no immediate reason to believe a significantly lower percentage of assaults would have been reported to the police between 1999 and 2010, this trend might reflect an actual decline in violent assaults, with more of these assaults turning deadly.

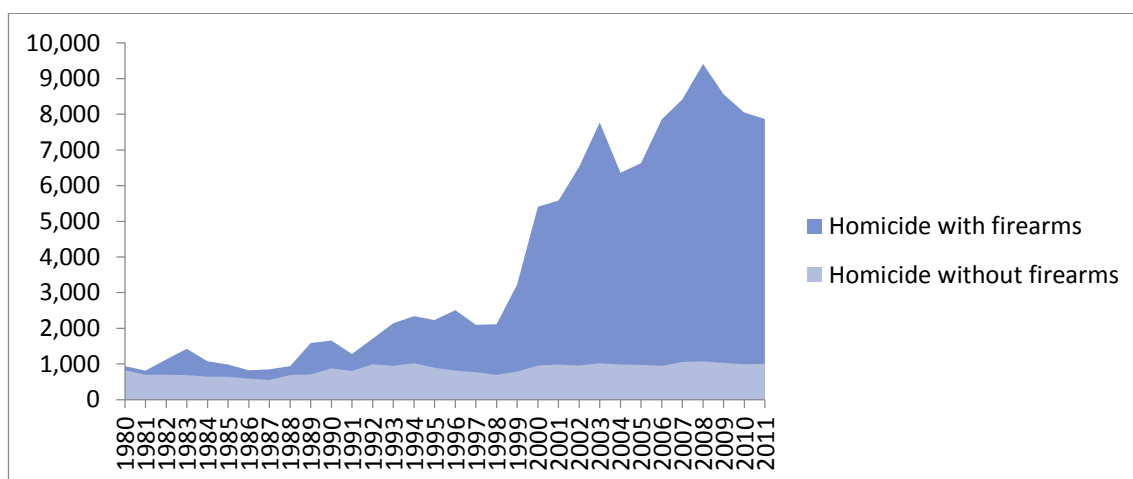
<sup>57</sup> Technically 'involving the use or threat of force', in Venezuela this means predominantly with firearms, 92% of robberies were committed with guns.

<sup>58</sup> 32% of robberies disclosed in the victimisation survey were said to have been reported to the police, a mere 22% of thefts.

### 3.4.2.3 Gun violence

The availability, or more correctly, use<sup>59</sup> of firearms is an important contributory factor to this deadly violence. Victimization, health and police statistics all reveal a high prevalence of firearm-related violence in Venezuela. These databases show that 80% to 90%<sup>60</sup> of homicides were committed with firearms. Tragic figures in global comparison, where 42% of homicides involve firearms<sup>61</sup>. Figure 3-10 shows the rise in homicides recorded in health data is primarily driven by firearm-related deaths. The absolute number of homicides committed without firearms remains relatively stable, whereas those committed with firearms rises steeply in proportion, from 53% in 1980, over 71% in 1995 to 90% in 2008.

**Figure 3-10 Homicides recorded in Health Statistics by use of firearms, 1980-2011 (Source: MPPS, Chacon)**



These trends suggest that, in the Venezuelan case, higher homicide rates might not necessarily reflect an inflated base of violent incidents. Although many trends and assumptions remain speculative, it is clear that Venezuela has seen a substantial rise in deadly interactions, and that this is in large part due to the use of firearms. This does not necessarily reflect a rise in violent interactions per se, challenging a common assumption that homicide is indeed the visible mask

<sup>59</sup> Use and availability of firearms do not correlate well. Many countries have high availability of firearms, yet little firearm related violence, see (Small Arms Survey, 2010). Guns have arguably been readily available throughout Venezuela's history, it may be their use that has increased.

<sup>60</sup> Depending on the source, 2009 victimisation survey 80% of offenses committed in previous year, 2009 MPPS data 89% and 90% in 2010 CICPC data.

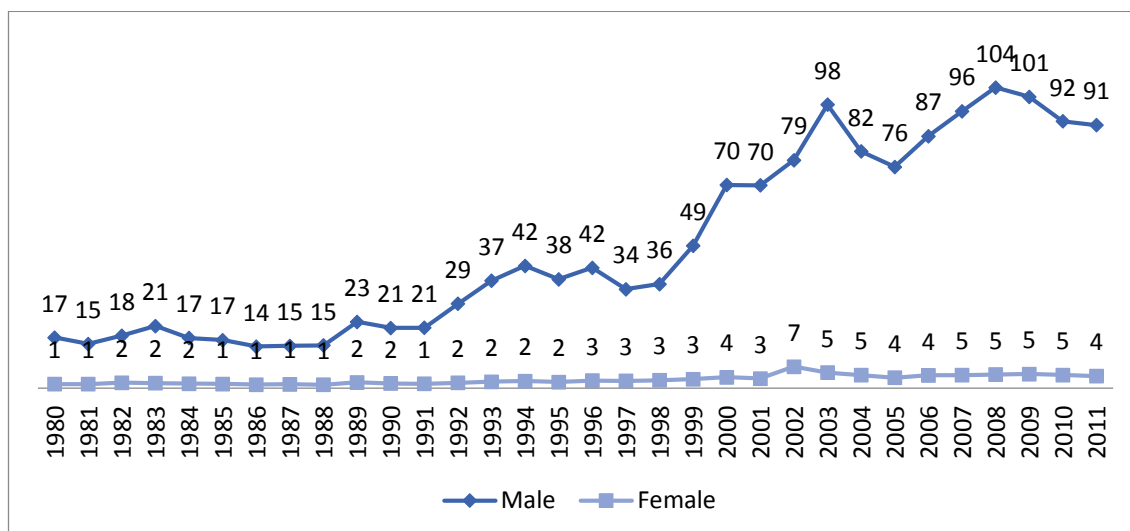
<sup>61</sup> A global rate which is itself to a large extent driven by Latin America; the vast majority (74%) of homicides within the region are committed with firearms. Even for this region however, Venezuela has high incidence rates. In the UK and US, only 6% and 60%, respectively, of homicides are committed with firearms.

of a bigger beast, and a 'reasonable proxy for violent crime in general' (see e.g. (UNODC, 2011; WHO, 2002).

#### 3.4.2.4 Threatened masculinities

In other countries, victims, as well as perpetrators, of lethal violence are more likely to be young men. In Venezuela too, 96% of firearm deaths in health statistics, and 93% of homicide victims recorded by the police are men, a ratio of about 1 to 15. This is slightly more than Latin American average<sup>62</sup>, and much higher than the US where around three quarters of victims (or one woman for every 3 men) are men (Miethe et al., 2004). Figure 3-11 below shows the differential firearm mortality rates for men and women, where that for women has doubled over a decade, it remains marginal compared to that for men. The rise of lethal violence in Venezuela is driven almost entirely by male victimisation.

**Figure 3-11 Firearm mortality rates from health sources, men vs. women (MPPS)**



These observations differ further by age. In 2010, 71% of male victims of firearm violence were between 15 and 34 years old. The majority (57%) between 15 and 29, and nearly a quarter (24%) were between the ages of 20 and 24. Over the years, the rise in lethal violence has also disproportionately struck these age groups. The mortality rate for men between 20 and 24 in 2008 was 307 per 100,000<sup>63</sup>, up from an already enormous 204 per 100,000 in 2001. In 2010, homicide was the third most frequent cause of death for men generally, behind heart disease

<sup>62</sup> Vrancxk (2011) terms this viricide (to contrast with femicide) – homicide of males because they are male. An average of 1 female is murdered for every ten men in Latin America.

<sup>63</sup> For women there is also a slightly higher risk of victimisation in these age groups, although the highest rate of 9.8 per 100,000, for 25-29 year olds in 2008, is not nearly as pronounced as the relative male victimisation rate. Women maintain relatively similar levels of risk across the life span.



and cancer<sup>64</sup>, and before traffic accidents. For 15-44 year olds, they are the first cause of death by far. These trends reflect a demographic tragedy in the making, in 10 years' time more than 126,000 mostly young men died violent (avoidable) deaths.

It seems generally accepted that *barrio* residents are disproportionately likely victims of homicide, though there are no exact estimates of this differential risk. Some authors suggest that more than 80% of homicides occur in the *barrio*, but this may be based on the victimisation survey in which relatively few homicides were reported and where a distinction is made between social class of victims, rather than where they live. In the victimisation survey, 83% of victims of homicide were of two lowest social strata (Zubillaga, 2013). From the patterns in Figure 3-8 it is clear that homicide is indeed disproportionately concentrated in the *barrios* that surround Catia's more commercial district. If general young male risk peaks at 300, it is daunting to think about victimisation rates among young male *barrio* residents<sup>65</sup>.

Very little is known of the characteristics of offenders or the relationship to victims in Venezuela, as the vast majority of homicides go unsolved. In the US, around 90% of known perpetrators are men, usually under 30. Most homicides are committed by people known to the victim, family, friends or acquaintances. In 2010, strangers only accounted for 21% of homicides where the offender was 'known'. In Venezuela, the victimisation survey is the only one that gives us a window on perpetrators – 4% of victims (that knew details of the perpetrators) had been killed by women. It also reveals that, of households that reported someone in their household had been murdered and that knew whom killed them<sup>66</sup>, 60% were strangers, i.e. not anyone related to them. The deadly violence in Venezuela thus seems to be a violence between relative strangers. Young males that know of each other but do not interact on a regular basis. What thus contrasts Venezuela with countries where a large body of research on violence is available is that the majority of the violence we find out about does not occur between people that know each other. However, it does show the characteristics of a particular type of violence that has

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<sup>64</sup> Note that if causes of death were registered similarly in Capital district, Vargas and Miranda (see footnote 1, they seem to register many homicides under the 'unknown intent' category), it might in fact be the first cause of death nationally.

<sup>65</sup> There are estimates for deaths in prison. In 2012, 591 prisoners died, nearly 4% of all homicides occurred within protected walls (Observatorio Venezolano de Prisiones). On an (approximate) population of 48,262, this is a rate of 1,225 per 100,000, or more than 20 times the average homicide rate on the streets.

<sup>66</sup> Only 8% declared not knowing whom killed their household member. Note that reported homicides are just 1% of all reported crimes. It isn't exactly clear from how the report is structured how many households actually reported a homicide.

also received a fair bit of attention in the US, violence between gangs. Many authors describe how this violence is a violence committed with guns and in public spaces, between relative strangers, yet also relative equals (Braga et al., 2006; Decker and Pyrooz, 2010; Klein and Maxson, 1989; Miller, 1977). Indeed, this violence hardly crosses boundaries. I describe the dynamics of this violence in more detail in Chapter 7.

Some other police statistics seemingly corroborate that this violence is a violence between malandros. Table 3-3 shows that over two thirds (67%) of homicides and seven in ten (71%) firearm homicides in Venezuela are classified by the police<sup>67</sup> as a ‘settling of scores’ (‘Ajuste de cuenta’).

**Table 3-3 Police recorded homicide 2011, by motive and use of firearms (Benavides, based on CICPC)**

|                              | <b>All</b>         | <b>With<br/>firearms</b> | <b>Without<br/>firearms</b> |
|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
|                              | 100%<br>(n=14,007) | 100%<br>(n=12,706)       | 100%<br>(n=1,301)           |
| <b>Score settling</b>        | 67%                | 70,6%                    | 34,4%                       |
| <b>Robbery</b>               | 13%                | 13,4%                    | 13,2%                       |
| <b>Argument</b>              | 4%                 | 2,9%                     | 19,5%                       |
| <b>Passionate</b>            | 2%                 | 1,1%                     | 8,1%                        |
| <b>Contract Killing</b>      | 0%                 | 0,4%                     | 0%                          |
| <b>Under investigation</b>   | 13%                | 11,4%                    | 24,4%                       |
| <b>Other/ No information</b> | 0,2%               | 0,2%                     | 0,4%                        |

This terminology implicitly infers a dispute between gangs is at the basis of the violence, the victim is said to have had ‘problems’, unsettled scores within el malandreo. This is again substantially higher than other countries. The UK does not have a gang category as its homicide rate is already low, though reports assume up to 50% of shootings in London are gang-related. In the US around 7% of homicides are classified as gang-related.

From a reading of police files on 137 homicides in Catia in the first semester of 2012, brief descriptions indicate that, in homicides categorised as score-settling, people were often shot ‘without exchanging words’, with a high number of bullets, often in the head, by offenders whom often make a quick escape on a motorcycle. Of these 137 homicides, just 5 victims (under 4%) were female and 120 (nearly 88%) involved firearms.

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<sup>67</sup> Proper time series unavailable. Note that this classification may also be a registration effect, as a gang-related killing relieves the police from some responsibility.

It is hard to estimate homicide rates within gangs, in absence of estimates of gang membership, but US research (Levitt and Venkatesh, 2000) suggests an incredible 1 in 4 chance of dying in a four year period. This was about 80 times the rate observed among young (14-17) black males in the US.

In all, it is difficult to establish exactly what percentage of these homicides is perpetrated by *malandros*, its exact proportions remain unknown. Nevertheless, the characteristics reviewed here, particularly the high male victimisation rate, the use of guns, the unknown relationships between victim and offender, and the categorisation as score-settling suggest much of this violence is indeed related to *el malandreo*, rather than a product of ongoing conflicts within relationships.

In conclusion, homicide statistics in Venezuela may not reflect everyday violence. Unfortunately, there is little way of knowing whether everyday violence generally has gone up or down in Venezuela. Perception data would suggest it has gone up, but are notoriously unreliable in this regard. Grouping all (deadly) violent interactions together as if expressing a common underlying motivation or violent urge may be a crucial mistake, that prevents from getting to the bottom of the problem (Cao et al., 2008).

## CHAPTER 4      METHODOLOGY

### **4.1 Introduction; exploratory case study research**

This thesis is based on data collected during 12 months of fieldwork in Venezuela, over the course of three different visits between May 2009 and December 2012. This chapter describes the methodological choices that were made. It describes the choice for two different locations where data were collected and the strategies that were used to find, approach, observe and interview respondents.

From previous chapters, it is clear that recent trends in Venezuela appear to contradict a theoretical positive relationship between inequality and violence. The usual indicators of these concepts display a negative relationship that contradicts research findings in other contexts. This makes Venezuela an apt candidate for a deviant case study (Gerring, 2007, p.105) to explore what, if any, might be the connections between inequality and violence. Chapter two showed that most studies that have explicitly evaluated the relationship between inequality and violence have taken a quantitative approach. They rely on aggregate indicators which offer limited insight. The current study is aimed at a better understanding of the underlying concepts and exploring any micro-level connections between inequality and violence that may be missed using aggregate indicators. It focuses in particular on people's relationships and how these can help clarify these connections. Further, it focusses predominantly on barrio residents' relationships, as the barrio is where much of this violence occurs (see Chapter 3).

Understanding and exploring are better served by qualitative data collection methods, although I use network methods that offer a quantifiable perspective on people's relationships. An intensive approach to data collection limited me to the selection of just a few sites where these data could shed most light on the research questions, sacrificing scope for understanding. I had to make a number of choices; selecting areas in which to observe and approach people, what and when to observe or collect, selecting respondents for the semi-structured instrument and making most use of my time with them by asking them the right questions. This often involved trade-offs which I will address in each of the following sections.

### **4.2 Selection of fieldwork sites**

Gerring (2007), in a thorough review of case study approaches, identifies the common rationale behind all selection strategies as looking for variation and representativeness. I used a 'most

different<sup>68</sup> (Ibid. p.139) approach to the selection of broad research sites. I selected two cities that offered variation on inequality but were relatively similar in terms of homicide rates, within practical constraints. Travel time between the two sites was around 8 hours by bus, which is manageable. Further, I had some access to homicide data, and contacts, in each of these sites. Catia, the research site in Caracas in particular, is a research focus for UNES, an Experimental National University of Security. This University was established in 2009, dedicated to educating a revolutionary police force, and understanding security issues more broadly. It has a large base of lower-level data which I could draw on.

Figure 4-1 shows a political map of Venezuela, and the location of the fieldwork sites; Catia and Cumaná<sup>69</sup>.

**Figure 4-1 Political map of Venezuela with location of fieldwork sites**



As elaborated in chapter 3, Venezuela's administrative divisions hide a country of contrasts. Considerable rural and urban poverty is eclipsed by the riches of rural haciendas and

<sup>68</sup> This involves selecting cases that vary on the independent variables (inequality) but are similar on the dependent variable (violence). If (any) similar processes can be found to operate between inequality and violence in differing contexts, more confidence can be had that these processes indeed influence any relationship.

<sup>69</sup> I am using common names for these cities to avoid confusion. When talking about Catia, I actually refer to what is administratively known as the parish of Sucre, in the municipality of Libertador, in the Capital District. Cumaná is (confusingly) the capital of both the municipality of Sucre and the state of Sucre. It actually only comprises 3.5 of Sucre municipality's 7 parishes, but the vast majority of its population. Some of the data below are actually for the municipality of Sucre rather than Cumaná as such, as parish level data are often unavailable beyond the capital.

extravagances of its cities. Internal contrasts are arguably especially palpable within the big urban centres, such as the capital Caracas, where colourful barrios garnish the hills around an opulent central business district.

The fieldwork site I selected here, Catia, is a parish on the North-western edge of Caracas. It is an area of predominantly informal housing that spreads high up into 'el Avila', the mountain that separates the valley of Caracas from the Caribbean Sea. The lower parts of Catia are relatively consolidated, with a shopping Boulevard spanning several metro stations, busy markets, cinemas and plenty of entertainment. Houses become ever more precarious the further up the hills one ventures, paved streets turning into seemingly endless flights of stairs and, even further up, unpaved and sandy alleyways. El cerro, literally, the mountain, is a pejorative term for the shacks that have sprouted upwards and northwards, into the mountain.

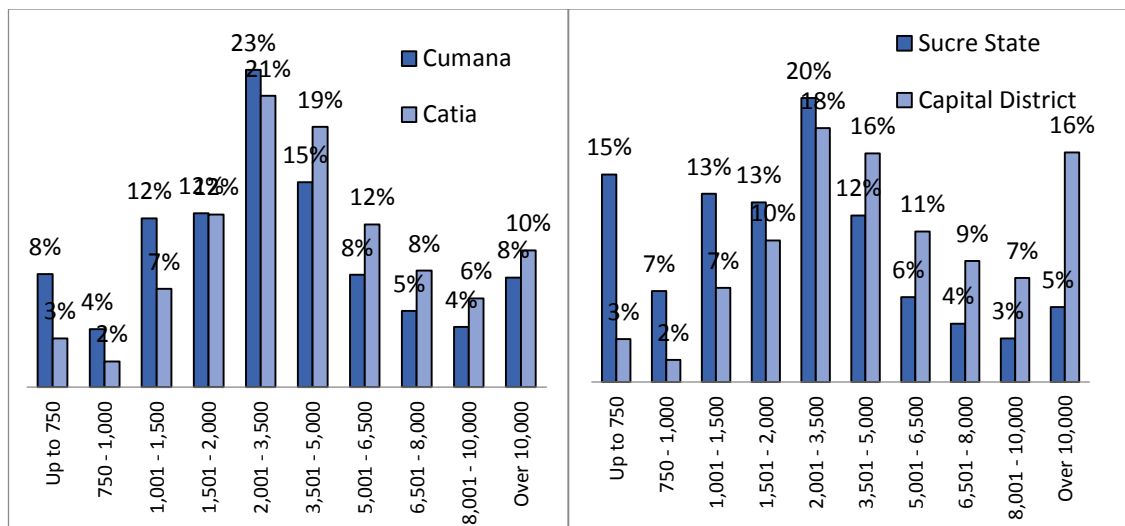
**Picture 4-1 Catia, Caracas 2012**



My other fieldwork site, Cumaná, is the capital of Sucre state, a much poorer, rural state on Venezuela's Eastern Caribbean Coast. I selected Cumaná to get a better idea of Venezuela's urban-rural cleavages explored in Chapter 3. It is a historic fishing town that also houses a Toyota factory. The informal areas of Cumaná spread out wide, rather than high, into its surrounding wastelands. Unlike Catia (which centre is less well-regarded than other, richer parts of Caracas), the centre of Cumaná also houses the very rich, owners of tuna factories and private yachts. Where Caracas' richer residents are continuously confronted with the barrio in their views of the city, they can avoid entering it. Cumaná is more compact this way, the shacks are perhaps not as visible, but arguably less avoidable as people contemplate the city's streets. Poverty is still more obvious in Cumaná; it was rather upsetting to find alleys where sewage waters ran free, something I never encountered in Caracas.

**Picture 4-2 Cumaná, 2012**

Figure 4-2<sup>70</sup> shows these cities' income distributions in the left-hand panel, and their respective state-level income distributions in the right-hand panel.

**Figure 4-2 Household income distribution in Cumaná (Sucre) and Catia (Capital District) (INE 2001)**

In 2001, Cumaná had double the amount of people earning less than 1,500 bolívars<sup>71</sup> than Catia (24% compared to 12%), but a similar amount earning over 10,000 (8% and 10% respectively). Nevertheless, the right-hand panel shows their substantially varying wider contexts. State-level income distributions are almost polar opposites. Sucre's distribution is skewed towards the bottom, whereas that in the Capital District is skewed towards the top. There are many more

<sup>70</sup> This figure is based on 2001 data, as lower-level data from the 2011 census were unavailable.

<sup>71</sup> It is difficult to translate this figure into other currencies. Venezuela has pegged its currency to the dollar, which has generated a lucrative black market in dollars. Since 2001, this currency was devalued by 1,000 bolívars, creating the bolívar fuerte, the strong bolívar, which is shown here. In 2012, 1,500 bolívars was worth around \$350 officially, but just over \$200 on the black market at the start of the year and just \$100 by the end.

lower-income households in the state of Sucre<sup>72</sup>. Where Cumaná is surrounded by less affluent communities, Catia is surrounded by more affluent communities in the Capital District and Caracas more broadly.

Table 4-1 shows some sociodemographic indicators for both fieldwork sites.

**Table 4-1 Sociodemographic comparison of fieldwork locations (INE, CICPC)**

|                         | Average income<br>(Bolivars,<br>INE 2011) | Income Gini<br>Coefficient<br>(INE 2011) | Basic<br>Necessities<br>Poverty<br>(INE 2011) | Population<br>(Census<br>INE 2011) | Population<br>Density<br>(inhabitants / km <sup>2</sup> ,<br>INE 2011) | Homicide<br>rates/<br>100,000<br>(CICPC,<br>2011) |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|------------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Capital District</b> | 4,439                                     | 0.36                                     | 12%   | 1,943,901                          | 4,489  | 91  |
| <b>Catia</b>            | n/a                                       | n/a                                      | 14%   | 345,944                            | 4,003  | 82  |
| <b>Sucre State</b>      | 2,728                                     | 0.37                                     | 30%   | 896,291                            | 76   | 43  |
| <b>Cumaná</b>           | n/a                                       | n/a                                      | 26%   | 358,919                            | 230  | 70  |

This table shows that relatively similar state-level Gini coefficients<sup>73</sup>, income differences between all inhabitants, of 0.36 and 0.37 mask substantial variation within these states. In 2011, state-level average household incomes, were almost double that of Sucre (2,700 bolivars) in the Capital District (4,400 bolivars). Further, 30% of people in Sucre state and 26% of Cumanese had at least one of their basic necessities<sup>74</sup> unfulfilled, compared to 12% and 14% in the Capital District and Catia, respectively. It also shows these two areas have similar number of inhabitants, around 350,000, but population density is much higher in Catia than in Cumaná, with 4,003 and 230 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> respectively. Further, on the state level these sites had quite different levels of deadly violence in 2011, 91 police recorded homicides per 100,000 in the Capital District, compared to 43 per 100,000 in Sucre. Nevertheless, the selected research areas have more similar rates, 82 and 70 homicides per 100,000 in Catia and Cumaná, respectively.

Figure 4-3 traces these homicide rates over time on the state level<sup>75</sup>.

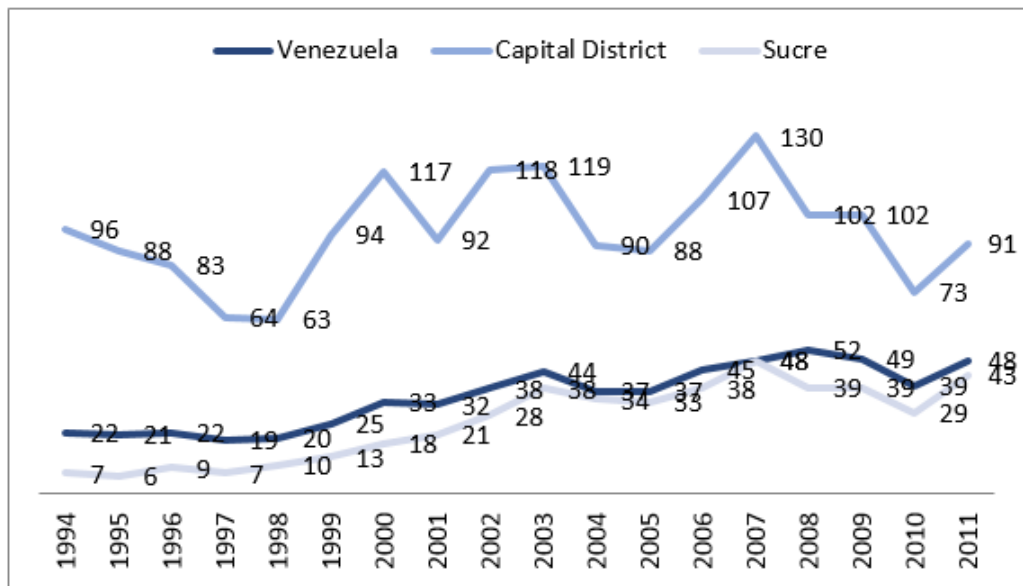
<sup>72</sup> This is reflected in other development indicators. Sucre is at the lower end of Human Development within Venezuela, with a 2011 HDI of .78, where the Capital District has the highest levels of human development .91 (INE 2012). See also Figure 3-1 in Chapter 3.

<sup>73</sup> See Chapter 2 p.31.

<sup>74</sup> Basic necessities poverty is based on 5 dimensions; education, overcrowding, housing adequacy, basic services and economic dependency. Households are considered poor when at least one of these dimensions is unsatisfactory.

<sup>75</sup> Lower-level time series are not available.



**Figure 4-3 Evolution of police recorded homicide rates, selected states (Data source: CICPC)**

Where the Capital District traditionally has the highest homicide rates in Venezuela, Sucre has more average levels. In line with national homicide rates, its homicide rate has risen more or less steadily but substantially (614%) over the last decades, from 7 per 100,000 in 1994 to 43 in 2011. Homicide rates in the Capital District reached 91 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2011, which is actually a return to 1995 levels. Of the few researchers that have looked at violence in Venezuela, most have limited their observations to Caracas (Rodgers and Baird, 2014). I thought it very important to be able to say something about a different city, where most of the recent increases in violence have occurred (see also Chapter 3). Levels of homicidal violence in Caracas ebb and flow strongly, nevertheless, they have remained relatively stable, whereas in Cumaná they have risen more continuously over the last decades.

In all, these research areas were seen to offer lots of variation on inequality, with relatively similar levels of deadly violence. Finding evidence for similar processes in these widely differing areas can underscore the validity of my findings.

### **4.3 Data collection**

I collected a wide variety of primary data over the course of 12 months fieldwork during three visits to Venezuela between May 2009 and December 2012. I first started collecting data in Caracas between May and July 2009, whilst doing an internship with 'Red de Apoyo por la Justicia y la Paz' (Red de Apoyo), an organisation that engages local communities in raising awareness of police torture, impunity and justice more broadly. I accompanied their staff on

various community engagement visits to the barrio and made my first contacts there. I started my PhD part-time in September that year, later obtaining 1+3 ESRC funding which required me to do an MSc degree in cross-national and comparative research methods in 2010/2011. I returned to the field during spring break that academic year, in April 2011, conducting some stakeholder interviews, making further contacts and collecting secondary data to justify my selection of research communities. Between March and December 2012, I fully immersed myself in the field. In all, I spent around 10 weeks in Cumaná on 4 different visits during 2012. The remainder of my time was spent in Caracas.

During this time, I collected primary data through participant observation, unstructured individual and group interviews and semi-structured personal network interviews. Many interviews were conducted informally, for some, and particularly the group and semi-structured interviews, I used interview guides that can be found in Appendix 2. All respondents were given a study information sheet that stressed confidentiality and anonymity and had my and the University's contact details, also in Appendix 2. Respondents that participated in more formal interviews signed an authorisation form. I stressed confidentiality throughout these interviews and particularly before any questions on violence. I always obtained consent to use a tape recorder, which was not refused on many occasions. This resulted in 122 audio files of unstructured and semi-structured interviews with 98 unique respondents (residents as well as stakeholders, some were repeat interviews) and 27 recordings of group interviews with a further 130 unique respondents. These records ranged from just 10 minutes to 3 hours in length, of which around 40 were transcribed by a research assistant in Venezuela, others I transcribed myself. Table 4-2 lists unique respondents according to type of interview and location.

**Table 4-2 Unique respondents according to type of interview and fieldwork site**

|                           | <b>Total</b> | <b>Catia</b> | <b>Cumaná</b> |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Semi-structured interview | 45           | 38           | 7             |
| Unstructured interview    | 53           | 41           | 12            |
| Group interview (n=27)    | 130          | 85           | 45            |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>228</b>   | <b>164</b>   | <b>64</b>     |

My informal interviews and observations also resulted in 239 typed pages<sup>76</sup> of fieldnotes and some written notebooks. These fieldnotes and transcriptions were analysed through repeated reading, picking up quotes, and applying some codes through comments and annotations. The

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<sup>76</sup> This also included sections of newspaper articles and/or opinion pieces I wanted to refer to later on.

semi-structured interview data were coded in Excel and analysed with SPSS, as well as E-net and Gephi for the network data.

Throughout this thesis, all given names and references to places (apart from the place names of Catia and Cumaná themselves, and the name of the prison gang in Cumaná) were anonymised to ensure that what people said cannot be linked back to them personally.

#### **4.3.1 Field entry and gatekeepers**

During my time in Venezuela, I lived predominantly in central and serviced areas in Caracas as well as Cumaná, venturing to the barrio on an almost daily basis. In Caracas I shared a flat with two others, in Cumaná I stayed in a central hostel. My research was intended to explore relationships in the barrio as this is where the majority of the violence occurs. Nevertheless, I had chosen to live in central areas because I myself had been apprehensive about my personal safety in the barrio, particularly at night. In the end living in these areas gave me a privileged view of the whole, the relationships and stereotypes that maintain the barrio, and made me question my own stereotypical preconceptions of its ubiquitous violence. I ended up staying over in the barrio for a few weeks too, with two religious organisations and in a public hospital in Caracas and a friend in Cumaná.

I first made contact with community organisations in Catia's barrios through abovementioned Red de Apoyo, whose staff introduced me to a number of clerics and Consejos Comunales, community councils initiated by Chávez (see Chapter 3). I later also started accompanying UNES staff, attending community engagement sessions, accompanying them on surveys<sup>77</sup> and making further contacts with community leaders in various sectors of Catia. In Cumaná, both the local government and statistics office (INE) introduced me to Consejos Comunales in their communities. I made contact with another just wandering the streets and walking into their office which was, as many are, clearly marked with posters of Chávez and other revolutionary heroes. These contacts were particularly interesting and gave me privileged insight in the politics of community relations. Nevertheless, it became clear that neither the church nor the Consejos Comunales truly engage everyone in the community. The Consejos Comunales in particular often work by representation more than participation, only a select few community members are part of the core working group. Decisions are meant to be made by majority in community

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<sup>77</sup> As mentioned above, one of the reasons I selected Catia was because this was also the area where the experimental university (UNES) had started rolling out its programmes aimed at violence reduction, this included a vast array of programmes, including victimisation surveys.

meetings, but it is not always clear how many community members attend these meetings (see also Machado (2008, 2009)). Chapter 5 will show they are often distrusted in the community. Both these organisations were extremely helpful in helping me find willing respondents and organising group interviews, but they would present me mostly to people that were actively engaged in community activities and this hardly included the local *malandros*, people that are engaged in various delinquent activities and arguably responsible for most of Venezuela's deadly violence (see Chapter 3). In some cases, they only introduced me to the people they wanted me to hear.

**Picture 4-3 One of my gatekeepers in her barrio in Catia, 2012**



I also started meeting and interviewing people on the street 'randomly'<sup>78</sup>. It is often said Venezuelans are '*callejero*', literally 'of the street', implying they live their lives in and around the streets. This is true for some, though others – particularly the better-off – live their lives more or less behind closed doors. Nevertheless, it was easy to start a conversation with anyone, whether on public transport, on the street or in shops, and these various entry strategies meant I also spoke to people that did not go out very often. Some people that attended church services for instance, often lived more secluded from more general *barrio* life. More problematic was that I was not coming into contact with people involved in violence. Particularly at the start I would not have considered walking up to the boys hanging around the street corners, keeping an eye out for greater trouble. It had never been my intention to speak to *malandros* directly, I had originally intended to select relatively violent sectors on the basis of this qualitative research phase where I could then conduct more interviews. Nevertheless, people often thought that other neighbourhoods were more violent (through processes I will explore in detail in Chapters 7 and 8) and this strategy did not work. I decided to start interviewing people between the

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<sup>78</sup> Of course this is never truly random, chances of meeting people on the street also implied they are more likely unemployed, relatively easily approachable etc.

arguably safer<sup>79</sup> confined walls of prisons and hospitals, an approach used by a.o. Wilkinson (2003) in her research with violent youth in New York.

**Picture 4-4 Hospital environments in Caracas and Cumaná, 2012**



Unfortunately, after a number of enquiries I was not allowed to visit prisons in Caracas<sup>80</sup>, but I did interview a number of victims of gun violence in Catia's three public<sup>81</sup> hospitals, obtaining often hard-negotiated clearance from hospital directors. In Cumaná I was allowed in a police prison compound where I conducted a group and various individual interviews. Prison, as I will explore in Chapter 7, is separated in wards where 'prans', prison leaders, make and observe the rules. Initially, prison staff introduced me to people that did not live on these wards, rather within the public areas of prison<sup>82</sup>, but after further enquiries, and approval from a pran himself, I also gained access to one of the wards that houses a group of people that identify with one of Cumaná's well-known gangs. I also interviewed a couple of victims of gun violence in Cumaná's main public hospital.

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<sup>79</sup> Arguably, as Venezuela's prisons and hospitals are also notoriously violent. In 2012 alone, 591 prisoners died, nearly 4% of all homicides occurred within protected walls (Observatorio Venezolano de Prisiones). Further, there are many stories of incidents of violence in hospitals. In one of Catia's hospitals, a gang had come to kill someone they failed to kill in a first attempt on the street. Public hospitals today rely on heavy military protection.

<sup>80</sup> Venezuela's prisons are notoriously lethal (see footnote above) and a particularly sensitive area to the government.

<sup>81</sup> A few private hospitals I also visited (one in Catia, others in a more affluent area) promised to call me if and when any gunshot victims came in, but never did. Apparently victims of gun violence in these private hospitals are relatively rare, perhaps also indicative of the class background of gunshot victims, whom are unlikely to have private insurance. Public hospitals had an almost continuous instream of gunshot victims. Every single week there were several new people to be interviewed, in each of these three hospitals just serving Catia. One Friday night I stayed over on the emergency ward, two corpses came in and at least 5 more victims were attended to. As the night went on, many others had to be turned away as all doctors were busy operating.

<sup>82</sup> This may be difficult to grasp, as it was for me. The walls of prison seem almost permeable, some more trusted prisoners live among staff. This prison also had a separate little enclave where 3 women were held.

**Picture 4-5 Police prison compound in Cumaná, 2012**

It was through a friend of a friend, who had moved to a middle-class area from one of Catia's barrios, that I made contact with an ex-malandro he had come to respect and known all his life, having growing up together in the barrio. This ex-malandro introduced me to the new malandro generations in his barrio, which gave me access to perhaps the most pertaining insights of this thesis. After explaining my research interests in an interview/conversation that lasted almost three hours in a central café, he was convinced of the importance of my research, and introduced me to two different groups in his barrio, stressing that he trusted these people and that nothing would happen as long as I followed his guidance, and let him know when I was coming. I typically sent him a text message before I visited. The boys of these groups, after having been briefed by this ex-malandro, were happy to have me around and also very protective. They knew that if something happened to me, they could be in trouble with him. As time passed, and more trust was established, they started inviting me to parties (which I always declined) and also took me to two major drug transaction sites, where large quantities of drugs are transacted and rifles more or less openly carried. These ventures too, were approved by the ex-malandro.

Around the same time a contact I made in hospital introduced me to her neighbour's son whom had started taking on a life of vice, as she described it. He himself identified as a malandro. Importantly, residents usually have a mental image of malandros as evil and ruthless killers, their neighbours' sons often do not fit this picture. Stereotypes abound and I certainly will not pretend to have been immune to their effects. I will evaluate the complexities of this image of malandros in Chapter 7, as a myth that reproduces the barrio's ecology of danger and ultimately, its deadly violence. After having spent some time with these malandros in Catia, I myself came to see them as normal boys more than violent predators and gained confidence approaching them in different areas, including Cumaná. In Cumaná, I asked one of my contacts from a Consejo Comunal to introduce me to the local malandros in her barrio, and she happily obliged, often sitting with us as we chatted. I gained further trust with this group through my contact with a

local cleric whom had set up a pacification project among the different feuding groups of the barrio, giving them jobs in exchange for ending the killings. If something had happened to me, they would certainly have faced consequences.

In all, I always took care that these people, and my flatmate in Caracas or hostel staff in Cumaná, had my mobile number, and knew where I was and how long I estimated to be there. In the next section I describe the strategies I used to collect qualitative data in these areas.

#### **4.3.2 Qualitative research strategies**

I collected the qualitative data for this study through participant observation, as well as unstructured group and individual interviews. In this section I explore these methodologies in more detail.

##### **4.3.2.1 Participant observation**

Participant observation is a much used (and equally abused) term. It is about immersion, ‘hanging out’, ‘talking the talk’ and ‘walking the walk’ (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2010) with the locals. In the barrio I accompanied representatives of Consejos Comunales, clerics and police officers on community walks and surveys, attended church, community meetings and protest marches, spent time with housewives, informal merchants, police officers, mototaxistas and malandros. I also took salsa classes, joined a running club and attended baseball games. I mostly sat or stood informally chatting and joking with old and new faces, and then did the same when I returned for the night, participating in the activities, lives and loves of my flatmates, and other hostel dwellers in Cumaná.

**Picture 4-6 Informal merchants in Cumaná and Caracas, 2012**



As an outsider in so many ways (white, non-native Spanish, female), I was a privileged observer of Venezuela’s divided worlds in two very different parts of the country. My thick accent and white face allowed me question people’s daily practices, they happily explained their most basic actions. I will discuss the intricacies of my position in more detail in section 4.4.



In all, observation mainly involved wandering the barrio, stopping to observe and chat and taking people up on proposals to show me their lives and experiences. I always carried my notepad and tape recorder, though I had to be cautious with my camera, phone and laptop. I stood out anyway, visibly carrying a laptop would have drawn further (unwanted) attention. People on the streets do not carry or wear expensive things generally as robberies are so common. Cameras are a rare sight, and I always felt wary taking pictures in the barrio. The national office for statistics (INE) strongly advises against carrying expensive material in the field, their interviewers have frequently been robbed of them, and they now always go out in groups of three or more. I took notes on my laptop almost every night, reflecting on the events and conversations of the day gone past. This resulted in many pages of typed notes and various thoughts and ideas jotted down in several notebooks.

**Picture 4-7 Barrio sights, Caracas and Cumaná 2012**



I should devote some attention to my observations of malandros. As explained above, I gained access to a number of sites of encounter and exchange between malandros, two in Caracas one in Cumaná. These were mainly street spots where boys convened in variable numbers to chat, laugh, play computer games, and/or sell and consume drugs. We mostly stood around chatting, laughing and joking, sometimes sharing some beers. Other people went about their daily business as we stood around, so I never felt in particular danger. Further, I mostly went to these places early to late afternoon and left before night fell. Although I stayed later on three occasions, on at least one of these occasions I may have compromised my safety as I will explore in the ethics section below. These spots are indeed hotspots for homicide, but it is difficult to appreciate when these might occur. The very nature of these boys' predicament, as I will explore in Chapter 7, is that they always have to be 'activo', on guard for trouble. I, too, was always on guard, looking around and ensuring I had somewhere to run should something happen. Being a woman helped me feel relatively safer, even if shootings occur, few women get killed in Venezuela (see Chapter 3). Further, these boys were protective of me, knowing that if something



happened to me they could get in trouble with the ex-malandro that introduced me to them, or the cleric that had given them jobs in the case of Cumaná. None of these groups had very active conflicts, although on one street in Catia two boys had gotten killed a few months earlier. Most sources say homicides are most likely to occur on the weekend, and I mostly stayed away on the weekend, nor did I accept their invitations to parties, when many homicides also tend to occur. Further, other people always knew where I was.

In prison, I never felt unsafe. The pran that had allowed me to access the ward was very keen for me to get a good impression of his rule, and guaranteed my safety. In all, all these boys were incredibly respectful towards me, ensuring for instance they kept their guns out of sight as I told them they made me very uncomfortable. Overall, these observations were incredibly important in contextualising the other types of data I collected.

#### **4.3.2.2 Unstructured group and individual interviews**

I conducted unstructured stakeholder (e.g. police officers, local NGOs, government representatives etc.), individual and group interviews. In some more formal cases, and particularly for the organised group interviews I used an interview guide, which can be found in Appendix 2.

**Picture 4-8 Pictures from some group interviews**



Many group interviews were organised for me by local organisations, mainly local churches and Consejos Comunales and also took place on their respective premises. I asked these organisations to organise groups that were relatively homogenous in terms of age and gender to facilitate open discussion and mitigate potential conflict. Participants to these group interviews were predominantly older women. Nevertheless, I also interviewed a good deal of young people, in a dance and two church groups, where more men were present. I also conducted group interviews in two classrooms with boys aged 7 to 14. In the UK there is strict guidance for interviewing children which is not present in Venezuela (Birkbeck et al., 2010). Nevertheless, I obtained consent from the teachers and principals and never focussed on

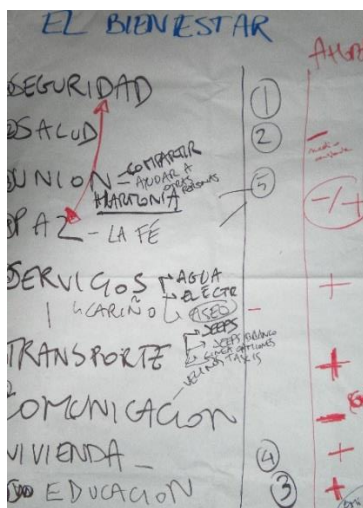
violence in these interviews. I got these children to draw and talk about their quality of life. Violence did come up, one boy mentioned for instance that he was moving away because of the gun violence on his street, but I did not probe him and moved on to other boys' thoughts ensuring not to upset anyone. Nevertheless, for some of these boys, violence is often very much a part of their lives, talking about it may be cathartic more than upsetting. I ensured that the teacher was present at all times.

The interview guide focused on perceptions and experiences of some broad areas (as well as perceptions of recent changes in these respective domains); quality of life, violence, community cohesion and institutions. These questions varied depending on the interviewee – e.g. when I interviewed police officers I focused more on violence, with government officials more on institutions and quality of life. In most group interviews I used participatory techniques, such as drawing, listing and ranking that are often used in focus group research, e.g. by Moser and McIlwaine (1999) and World Bank researchers (Dudwick et al., 2006; Narayan et al., 2000).

### Components of well-being and quality of life

I started off many interviews asking people what the characteristics of their community were, and what sorts of people lived there. I sometimes got people to draw the boundaries of their community and identify the types of organisations that were present in the community. I then focused on well-being and recent changes in the community. I often got people to define and list the components of a good quality of life. I did not often have to probe, if I did, I mentioned things like education, housing, income and employment. I asked people to rank these items in order of importance and evaluate any recent changes in these components. Picture 4-9 shows one of these listings I made with community members in Catia.

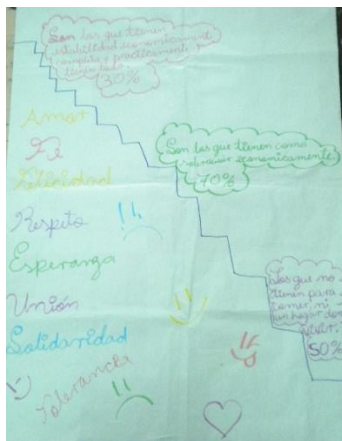
**Picture 4-9 Community well-being ranking**



Security was often already brought up as a major component of quality of life in these listings. Nevertheless, many people thought their general situations had improved, and particularly with the implementation of the Misiones, the social programmes implemented by Chávez (see Chapter 3). The Misiones that focused on education were generally seen as positive, although the health branch of these programmes, Barrio Adentro, which brought Cuban doctors to the barrios, as well as the Consejos Comunales, often received more criticism.

I sometimes also asked people to draw a ladder of conditions of life and imagine who might be at the top, who might be at the bottom, and where they might find themselves, or what proportion of the community might be found on each ladder. One of these ladders is shown in Picture 4-10.

**Picture 4-10 Quality of life ladder**



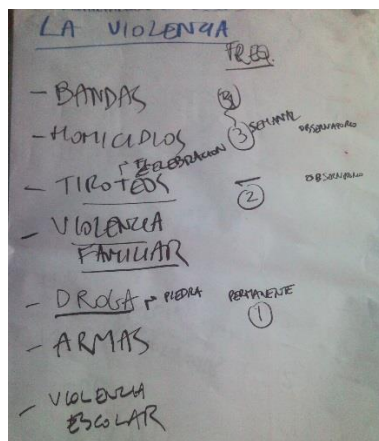
In general, people did feel many in the community were lacking basic resources, but they did not often see themselves as one of them, at least in Catia. In Cumaná, people often did feel worse-off.

If this had not been explored in detail through people's evaluation of their quality of life, I also asked people what the main problems in the community were, and what prevented them from having a good quality of life. Violence or security was often a main concern, although in some groups, particularly the younger ones, this was a more peripheral issue. In one group interview in Cumaná, I could not move past a discussion of the community's problems. It had been organised by a representative of the local government and many more people turned up than I could manage. As the community representative remained present, these people saw this as their chance to communicate their problems, and the discussion turned into a petition for government support.

### Types and degrees of violence

Moser and McIlwaine (2004) suggest qualitative research on violence should not identify this as a research concern from the start, not to distract respondents from other issues and make the interview situation too negative. I followed their suggestion, not introducing the research as a project on violence, but rather on exploring well-being in these communities. People often mentioned violence or security as a component of quality of life, and I asked them to define this in more detail. I asked them which types of violence were present in the neighbourhood, what its effects were and how they may have changed recently. Picture 4-11 shows one of these listings.

**Picture 4-11 Typology and ranking of violence**



Overwhelmingly, the most prevalent forms of violence were related to malandros; drug problems, homicides and shoot-outs.

In my group interviews with police officers, prisoners and malandros, I did ask about violence in detail. These were very insightful in terms of the dynamics that will be explored in Chapter 7, as well as the particular predicament of police officers, whom can generally count on little trust or support in the barrio.

Unlike experiences of Moser and McIlwaine in Colombia, people did not seem to have many problems talking about violence in these group situations. In Colombia in particular, it appears there is a code of silence around violence by paramilitaries (Moser and McIlwaine, 1999). Malandros do not operate in secret, people, and even the police, are often aware whom and where they are. Relationships with the community arguably sustain their existence, as Chapter 5 will explore. In the individual interviews, people often volunteered very personal stories, although I never probed or enquired for more sensitive details. Nevertheless, talking about

these experiences often seemed cathartic more than problematic. Some people cried, I often gave them a hug and an expression of my sympathy and regret for their situations, and asked if they knew people they could turn to. I had made contact with various organisations and sometimes referred people to the Red the Apoyo or an organisation that looks after victims of domestic violence.

### Community cohesion, institutions and support networks

Many groups already mentioned peace or cohesion under quality of life, and often felt this was compromised through violence. They did not really feel anyone was excluded from community life, although they often complained of a lack of respect for others in the community. This was an area that was quite difficult to get a sight on given the groups I was introduced to. As many of these groups were organised by the church and Consejos Comunes, they were people that were often relatively involved in the community. Nevertheless, even malandros often felt their communities were cohesive, although they complained about interfering neighbours. Interviews with people that no longer attended or engaged in community meetings and activities often revealed they rely on a close group of trusted others.

I also asked people which types of organisations and institutions they relied on for the satisfaction of their needs. I often related this to the items of quality of life explored above, asking people which types of formal and informal organisations they relied on for the items they identified as part of a good quality of life. Picture 4-12 shows one of these listings.

**Picture 4-12 Listing of components of a good quality of life and organisations that provide them**

| COMPONENTES DE UNA BUENA CALIDAD DE VIDA | FAMILIA | GOBIERNO | AYUDAS |
|--|---------|----------|--------|
| RESPONSABILIDAD                          | X       | X        | X      |
| HUMOR                                    | X       | X        | X      |
| PAZ                                      | X       | X        | X      |
| CONTINENCIA                              | X       | X        | X      |
| TRABAJO                                  | X       | X        | X      |
| CONVIVIR                                 | X       | X        | X      |
| PENSAMIENTO                              | X       | X        | X      |
| EXPRESAR                                 | X       | X        | X      |
| VALORES                                  | X       | X        | X      |
| TOLERANCIA                               | X       | X        | X      |
| DIVERSIDAD                               | X       | X        | X      |
| RESPECTO                                 | X       | X        | X      |
| VERDAD                                   | X       | X        | X      |
| LEGRIA                                   | X       | X        | X      |
| COOPERACION                              | X       | X        | X      |
| UTILIDAD                                 | X       | X        | X      |
| SEGURANCA                                | X       | X        | X      |
| GUARDIA                                  | X       | X        | X      |
| PAZ                                      | X       | X        | X      |

Family and friends featured highly on these lists. Although the government, was also frequently identified, providing important health and education services through the Misiones. Not many people seemed to rely on the private market for the satisfaction of their needs.

These qualitative observations and largely unstructured interviews provided me with lots of contextual detail, but little confidence that what I was observing was not a reflection of my own prejudices and the types of people I was introduced to, particularly with regards to people's relationships. Following Fleisher (2005, 2006), I combined this strategy with a more quantifiable one, through semi-structured personal network interviews. The particularities of this relatively new (certainly in criminology) network approach will be elaborated in the next section. The empirical chapters will demonstrate that these types of data complement each other quite well, qualitative data allow for interpreting and contextualising more quantitative network data. Both types of data will be used to support the arguments developed in this thesis.

#### **4.3.3 Semi-structured personal network interviews**

The semi-structured interviews were conducted towards the end of my fieldwork, between August and December 2012. I based the instrument on various examples from the literature which are referred to in respective sections below. The instrument itself can be found in Appendix 2. It explores a wide range of items, from demographics, opportunities and perceptions of quality of life, to experiences of violence, as well as people's interactions and relationships through closed and open-ended questions, providing both quantifiable as well as qualitative data. I used personal network tools to explore people's interactions and relationships. Personal network data allow for evaluating the characteristics of people's personal communities (Wellman, 1999), the people they interact with and rely on, people that are quite feasibly spread across different neighbourhoods, contexts and more traditional communities. I will explore the particulars of this method in more detail in section 4.3.3.2 below.

It should be stressed that this instrument is not an authoritative nor closed tool, it contains a mixture of items that have been used in different studies and was used as a means to explore some possible connections between inequality and violence rather than test hypotheses. I did not ask everyone all questions<sup>83</sup>, which is particularly relevant to my questions on violence. I originally meant to compare the networks of people involved in violence to people uninvolved. Nevertheless, I found it hard to implement such a categorisation and ended up using the self-report questions to construct an indicator that offers a more balanced view of people's involvement in violence. This is a limited strategy because not everyone was asked and answered all questions, nevertheless, this was not due to their involvement in violence, rather

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<sup>83</sup> Note that all people included in this sample completed the network component by listing the people they interacted with, as well as their characteristics and the relationships between them.

my own negligence in ensuring everyone answered all items. The questionnaire also contained many items I will not be exploring in this thesis due to space concerns.

In all, the questionnaire took around 1 hour and 20 minutes to complete on average. The shortest interview was around 40 minutes, the longest over 2.5 hours. Some were completed on two, and even three, separate occasions. As with the other interviews, all respondents were given a study information sheet that stressed confidentiality and anonymity, which was repeated on various occasions and in particular before questions on violence. I always obtained consent to use a tape recorder, which was refused by two respondents.

These interviews were coded in Excel, resulting in a data set that contains data related to 45 egos and 975 alters. I used E-net, a free software programme that can analyse several ego-networks at once, to compute measures of network composition and structure. Gephi was used for drawing personal network graphs for relevant case studies. I used SPSS for descriptive and correlation analyses.

#### **4.3.3.1 Sampling strategies and respondent profiles**

I aimed to get a broad sample of respondents in Catia and Cumaná, but also to interview people that had been involved in violence. I started approaching people on the streets of the barrio<sup>84</sup>, a method employed by Marques (2009) in Brazil, and asking them whether they would like to take part in the research project. Finding respondents this way was relatively straightforward, people were generally forthcoming and keen to participate. However, as mentioned above, I soon realised I might not be able to say much about violence itself. I decided to boost my sample with people that had been involved in violence. This concern drew me to hospitals, an approach used by e.g. Wilkinson (2003) in her research with violent youth in New York, and prisons. As fieldwork went on and I gained more confidence through my observations of malandros, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with people that had been involved in violence on the streets. In the end, I completed semi-structured interviews with 22 people because of their involvement in violence. I tried to complement these 22 people with a broad selection of respondents from the barrio, setting rough quotas to get a representation of different ages, professions and genders. Nevertheless, the sample remains biased towards males. It is also likely

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<sup>84</sup> Note that it had been my original intention to select a few relatively violent, lower-level, sectors to conduct these interviews in, but through processes mentioned above, I had not been very successful finding these sectors in a qualitative research phase, and decided on conducting interviews in hospitals to find individuals involved in violence. Nevertheless, these people could not be linked to a particular sector as they came from all over these parishes, and I decided to keep with the wider areas of Catia and Cumana.

biased towards poorer respondents, due to interviewing in public hospitals and on the streets, thus potentially including more people that were not working (although I also specifically looked to interview people that had formal jobs for comparison) or could not count on private insurance to be admitted to private hospitals.

Table 4-3 below breaks down respondents according to the location where they were interviewed.

**Table 4-3 Respondents according to interview location (N=45)**

| <b>Interview context</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>Cumaná</b> | <b>Catia</b> |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| Barrio                   | <b>42</b>    | 7             | 35           |
| Centre                   | <b>3</b>     | 0             | 3            |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>45</b>    | <b>7</b>      | <b>38</b>    |

Seven respondents were interviewed in Cumaná, the remainder in Caracas, limiting any comparative analyses between these areas. Nevertheless, the inclusion of Cumaná brought me many insights I would have missed out on otherwise, if anything the similar processes of violence between malandros that will be explored in detail in Chapter 7. I would also not have been able to speak to prisoners if I had focused on Caracas. Although the research focused on the barrio, I also interviewed three people living in higher-class centres of Caracas as a comparative standard. They turn out providing much richer insights into the dynamics of the barrio, as we will see in Chapter 5. In all, this sample is very much indicative and diverse rather than representative, it aims to explore the relationships people entertain in two Venezuelan cities, with a particular focus on barrio residents, and those involved in violence. I briefly summarise some other characteristics of this sample that will not be explored in further detail in the empirical chapters.

Of 45 people that completed the semi-structured questionnaire, 14 were female and 31 male. As mentioned above, this is skewed due to my strategy of sampling on violence. Only 1 of 13 people interviewed in hospital and 1 of 4 prisoners were female. The average age of respondents at the time of interview was 30, and the median age was 26. This is in line with the relatively young population of Venezuela, with a median age of 27, according to the 2011 census (INE, 2014). The youngest respondent was a 15 year old female victim of a stray bullet, the oldest a 55 year old ex-police officer that now owned a small informal business. The majority of respondents (28 or 62%) had a partner, and they had, on average, 1.2 children. Just under half (21 or 47%) had no children yet, but three teenagers were expecting a child when I interviewed them. One 38 year old security guard had most children, 5 in total. Most (72%) respondents



described themselves as non-white, black (22%) or 'moreno' (50%), mixed race, or 'café con leche', coffee with crème, as Venezuelans refer to people of mixed race.

On average, people had lived in their current homes for 13 years (ranging from a month to 47 years), or two fifths (42%) of their lives. A lot of respondents have grown up and continue to live in extended family homes. Nevertheless, a closer look at these data shows many respondents in this sample only do so temporarily. Table 4-4 shows respondents' residence according to permanency.

**Table 4-4 Residence of respondents, according to permanency (N=45)**

|                                 | Total |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Permanent home                  | 26    |
| No fixed abode, several homes   | 6     |
| Temporary/looking for elsewhere | 6     |
| Prison                          | 4     |
| Street                          | 3     |
| Total                           | 45    |

Over two fifths of respondents (19) did not have a permanent residence as such. Six respondents regularly stayed away from home as it was closer to work or away from problems. Another six temporarily lived with family or friends whilst they got on their feet after having lived elsewhere. Three currently lived on the streets, returning home intermittently. Four respondents were currently in prison.

Further, it soon transpired that, although I interviewed all but three respondents in the barrios where I did my fieldwork, they did not all live there. Apart from three people that lived in higher-class areas of Caracas, six other respondents had recently, within the last 6 months, moved up<sup>85</sup> from the barrio to a purposefully constructed building in a more middle-class area (2) or, more frequently, a satellite city (4). These people essentially grew up in the barrio, and still spent a good amount of their time there, often staying with their families, which was also where I met and interviewed them. As the majority of their contacts still lived in the barrio, I still see them as barrio dwellers for the purposes of this thesis. It is fair to say that only three respondents

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<sup>85</sup> Nobody had moved down from a central area to a barrio, although one respondent had grown up abroad, on the Canary Islands. He was born to a Venezuelan mother and a Spanish father and, after their divorce, moved to a Cumanese barrio, where he started hanging out with the local malandros.

belonged to the traditional middle-upper classes living in the centre; one of these was born and raised in a middle-class area, two had always lived in the most upper-class hills of Caracas.

Table 4-5 shows respondents' education according to their age category.

**Table 4-5 Highest obtained education level (N=45)**

|              |       | <b>Total</b> | <b>None</b> | <b>Primary</b> | <b>Some<br/>secondary</b> | <b>Bacca-<br/>laureate</b> | <b>Higher<br/>education</b> |
|--------------|-------|--------------|-------------|----------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Age</b>   | 15-21 | <b>11</b>    | -           | 0              | 7                         | 4                          | 0                           |
|              | 22-28 | <b>14</b>    | 1           | 1              | 5                         | 6                          | 1                           |
|              | 29-35 | <b>10</b>    | -           | 2              | 2                         | 3                          | 3                           |
|              | 36+   | <b>10</b>    | 1           | 2              | 3                         | 3                          | 1                           |
| <b>Total</b> |       | <b>45</b>    | <b>2</b>    | <b>5</b>       | <b>17</b>                 | <b>16</b>                  | <b>5</b>                    |

Just under half (21) of respondents had completed secondary school, five of whom had gotten a higher education degree. Some had not finished their educational trajectories yet; of eleven respondents aged 15-21, five were still studying. The lower educational achievements of older age groups stand out; two people had not finished primary school, and five others had not gone on to secondary education. Other characteristics of this sample are addressed in the empirical chapters. Appendix 1 also contains some additional descriptive tables.

#### **4.3.3.2 Categorical and self-report measures of violence**

Where it was my original intention to compare the networks of people that had been involved in violence to the networks of those that had not, my strategy of approaching people in hospital may not have been completely adequate to encounter people that had actually been involved in the types of deadly gun and gang violence that is the interest of this thesis. Table 4-6 below lists the number of respondents according to their involvement in violence, making a further distinction according to the type of involvement, which I explain below.

**Table 4-6 Number of respondents according to involvement in violence (N=45)**

|              |               |    |
|--------------|---------------|----|
| Not involved |               | 23 |
| Involved     | Victim        | 9  |
|              | Prisoner      | 4  |
|              | Mala conducta | 4  |
|              | Ex-Malandro   | 2  |
|              | Malandro      | 3  |
| TOTAL (N)    |               | 45 |

Many respondents I originally interviewed because of their involvement in violence, and particularly many of those interviewed in hospital, are eventually better described as victims, through a triangulation of their answers<sup>86</sup> on self-reported violence items that were also included in the questionnaire. Chapter 6 will explore these categories and their respective scores on a measure of self-reported violence in detail. It is likely that hospital may not have been a great strategy to find *malandros* in particular in the Venezuelan context. Because of the lethality of the violence *malandros* use (see Chapter 3), it could be that many *malandros* that get shot today never end up in a hospital bed; sadly, death is often inflicted instantly and they go straight to the morgue<sup>87</sup>. Only one person in hospital admitted to being a *malandro*, although he ascertained he would no longer hang out with *malandros* as soon as he could leave hospital. Another person said he had been involved in *el malandreo* in his younger years, but no longer engaged in it. On the other hand, with the *malandros* on the street, it was more difficult to conduct a semi-structured interview. They quickly lost interest. I only managed to conduct a complete network interview with two of the *malandros* I observed on the streets. The final sample, at least for the semi-structured interviews, thus includes just three self-identified *malandros*, but offers plenty of variation in terms of violence, as I will explore in much more detail in Chapter 6.

The category of ‘*mala conductas*’, badly behaved people, also deserves some attention. *Mala conductas* are not necessarily bound by the dark code of *el malandreo* (see Chapter 7), or the geographical limits of a sector, but might flirt with the *malandro* identity. Family members often describe boys involved in *el malandreo* as *mala conductas*. Seeing them in their role as son, nephew or brother makes it much harder to classify them under the nominator of *malandros* people read about in the newspapers. Nevertheless, four respondents in the sample were indeed better described as *mala conductas*, they had drug habits and robbed to sustain them, which they all freely admitted, but they did not feel tied to a sector in a *barrio* as *malandros* tend to. Further, many of the *malandros* I spoke to look down on the drug users they sell to. Two

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<sup>86</sup> It is possible these answers, and my subsequent categorisation, were affected by hospital surroundings. Although I always asked to conduct the interview in private, some had family members in the vicinity, which may have affected some of their answers. On the other hand, the hospital environment made these interviews somewhat easier, as people had time and were often happy to be distracted from their injuries. As in other interviews, I continued to stress the importance of honesty and confidentiality and have no reason to believe these respondents were more or less honest about their involvement in violence than others. Further, in these cases I often completed the interview in two sittings, which allowed me to check any inconsistencies.

<sup>87</sup> A reading of police records of homicides in Catia in the first semester of 2012 shows this grim detail, homicides often involve multiple bullets through the head. This was also corroborated by the police officers and morgue assistants I interviewed.

people had engaged in el malandreo in the past, but no longer identified with it, I describe them as ex-malandros. Four further respondents were prisoners in the police compound of Cumaná.

As already mentioned, I included some self-report questions on physical violence, as well as open-ended follow-up questions to explore specific instances of violence, but also some statements on anger and impulsivity and beliefs in the legitimacy of violence that will be explored in detail in Chapter 6. The ethical issues surrounding these questions are addressed in section 4.4.2 below. In the next section I look at the personal network component of the semi-structured instrument.

#### **4.3.3.3 Personal network data**

I used personal network tools to explore people's interactions and relationships. Just like traditional methods, a personal network approach includes questions about the respondents, also called 'egos'. It distinguishes itself from these more traditional methods through enquiring about (1) the people, or 'alters', each ego has a certain relationship with (through name generators), (2) characteristics of these alters (through name interpreters), and (3) relationships between these alters (through alter-alter ties).

#### **Name generators and network size**

Discussions about appropriate ways of eliciting alters are on-going. Personal network interviews can be long and burdensome; they need to strike a delicate balance between research value and respondent fatigue. It is impossible to get a full list of respondents' relationships, researchers thus have to sample relevant alters from their memory through name generators. This generates many problems and biases, that are discussed in detail elsewhere (Aral and Van Alstyne, 2011; Flap et al., 2006; McCarty and Molina, 2010; Van der Gaag et al., 2008). Some personal network approaches ask respondents for a determined number (e.g. 25, 40) of alters. This has the advantage of generating equally sized networks, with important implications for comparability of indicators, but offers less control over generating people from a diversity of contexts. For instance, one respondent had twenty-seven brothers and sisters, just naming these would have filled a reasonable list of alters, but would have offered little perspective on the variety of people he interacted with. I tried to limit recall bias by asking respondents for important alters across several life domains, the household, family, neighbourhood, education, work, and spare time. This is sometimes referred to as a contextual name generator (McCarty and Molina, 2010). It is similar to the name generator used by Marques (2012) in his study of personal networks in poor

communities in Brazil<sup>88</sup>. The questionnaire was structured around these five spheres. After asking some general questions about respondents' views and characteristics on each item, I also asked them to name me some people (up to five) that were important to them in that respective sphere<sup>89</sup>. I specifically asked for people older than 15, and with whom they had had some form of contact in the last 2 years.

Towards the end of the interview, I asked respondents to look back over the list of elicited alters and asked whether they could think of anyone else that was important to them, but had not yet been listed. I probed for specific categories of alters that seemed to be missing, such as people living in serviced centres. I initially wanted to include more problematic relationships, as I was particularly interested in violence and wanted to be able to potentially evaluate this type of relationships. I asked respondents whether they had had arguments, fights or conflicts with anyone in the past year. This proved difficult; even if people did not seem to have problems reporting instances of violence they had been involved in, it seemed more difficult to give these instances, quite literally, a name.

These 45 respondents listed a total of 975 people they had had contact with in the last 2 years, with an average of 22. A 50 year old buhonera (street vendor) found it difficult recalling just 11 people, whilst Juan, a prisoner in Cumaná, eagerly summed up 46<sup>90</sup>. Given these varying network sizes, we have to be careful comparing network indicators, as most depend heavily on size. Partly due to recall effects mentioned above, people tend to mention stronger (e.g. more trusted, more frequently seen) contacts first, then move on to weaker ties. The networks of people that mentioned fewer significant others are thus likely made up of stronger contacts that are also more likely to know each other, making the networks denser overall. Trends and findings reported in this thesis are thus always indicative, but offer many insights to be explored in further research.

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<sup>88</sup> With an important difference in that Marques also contacted the people in each person's network to obtain much larger networks overall, that include second degree contacts.

<sup>89</sup> This is arguably also less burdensome than a simple name generator, through varying ego and alter questions.

<sup>90</sup> Note that in chapter 6 I evaluate his network in more detail, including all 48 contacts he mentioned. Nevertheless, this included two people that had died, people I did not include for the analysis of network composition measures but are important for the points made in chapter 6.

### **Alter characteristics and network composition**

To be able to explore the characteristics of the network that is generated through these name generators, a network approach also involves asking questions about these alters and their relationship with the respondent, through name interpreters. I asked respondents about each of their alter's sex, age, profession and residence. I also enquired about alters' perceived quality of life on the same scale of 0 to 10 I used to evaluate their own quality of life. To evaluate the strength of their relationships, I asked how close these people lived, how long they had known them, how frequently they saw them and how much they trusted them. The alter and relationship attributes that are generated this way allow for evaluating the diversity and strength of people's networks and relationships. For the characteristics for which I have matching ego characteristics, I can also explore homophily, whether respondents' alters are similar to them, e.g. how many of a person's contacts have the same job, or are of the same sex. Homophily measures go beyond summarizing the alter characteristics, measuring the extent to which the alter characteristics match the respondent, this is also referred to as ego correspondence. I calculated network composition and homophily measures using E-net, these measures are summarised in tables in Appendix 1, whilst they are described in more detail in Chapter 5.

### **Alter-alter ties and network structure**

Another important aspect of personal networks is the set of relationships between alters, the 'connectedness', 'density' or 'cohesion' of the network. These are the actual relational data of a personal network analysis, that allow for evaluating the pattern of relationships in which an ego is embedded. Nevertheless, these are also the most burdensome to collect. A list of 25 alters produces 300<sup>91</sup>, albeit short, questions of whether each of these contacts have a relationship. I asked whether alters knew each other, i.e. whether they were likely to talk to each other if, for instance, running into one another in the supermarket. Network density has an effect on the spread of information and the constraint of people within these networks. Information spreads much quicker in tight, densely connected networks. I calculated network structural measures using E-net, they are summarised in Appendix 1, and described in more detail in Chapter 5.

In all the instrument aimed to capture a network that relatively accurately described people's social context in relatively few ties. This strategy had as an important side effect that networks are not of equal size, complicating comparability because most network measures depend on

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<sup>91</sup> Where n is the number of alters, the amount of possible ties is defined by  $(n*n-1)/2$ .

its size. Before analysing these data in greater detail in the empirical chapters, I first turn to some important ethical issues.

#### **4.4 Research ethics and reflexivity**

The nature of the research project presents a wide array of ethical issues I aim to address in this section.

##### **4.4.1 Ethical issues**

The first of a number of ethical issues relates to the representativeness of my data. With field methods like the ones I used for this project, one can never be sure to have spoken to a representative number of people (Decker, 1996). Nevertheless, through various entry strategies for the qualitative interviews and setting broad quotas for the semi-structured interviews, I tried to guarantee I spoke to a variety of different people that represent the diversity of Venezuela's barrios in two very different parts of the country. Further, the limited scope of the exercise is off-set by the wide range of meaningful data I collected in these quite different contexts, and particularly the data I was able to collect from malandros. I conducted group interviews until I reached a subjective level of saturation, when I felt people were repeating issues explored in other interviews. The use of both qualitative as well as more quantitative network data allows for triangulating my research findings, my qualitative observations and experiences mostly reflect and support the network analyses I explore in the following chapters. Mixed methods can illuminate different aspects of research concepts that are not necessarily reflected in a single method. Qualitative interviews allow for gaining broad, unprompted insights that are difficult to gather through more structured interviews. Nevertheless, the semi-structured interviews allow me to explore in more detail some of the assumptions made by theoretical perspectives outlined in Chapter 2. In all, any research project is ultimately influenced by the researcher's choices, addressing each of these choices allows for evaluating how they affected the research exercise and I hope to have done so in the previous sections.

There are many issues around personal safety in research on violence generally (Lee and Stanko, 2003). In Venezuela's context in particular, personal safety involves some common-sense measures such as not carrying expensive jewellery or displaying any other valuables such as camera, phone or laptop. I bought a very cheap and inconspicuous mobile phone and audio recorder that were kept in an equally discreet backpack whilst roaming the barrio. I often also carried the phone number of my flatmate in my trousers, in case my backpack was stolen. I was

vigilant at all times, and frequently went over how I would respond to any exposure to violence. I always had an idea of the area I was in, and remained fully aware of exit strategies. If I had been approached for any valuables I would never have felt the urge to resist, exposing myself to more danger of violence. Fortunately, I never had to apply any of these strategies.

When I completed the form to obtain ethical approval for my fieldwork I never intended to stay in the barrio, let alone engage with malandros. As fieldwork proceeded however, it became obvious to me that this would be necessary to answer my research questions. Further, as I gained more confidence in the barrio, I realised malandros are part of the barrio's daily life. All places where they convene have people going about their daily lives, children running up and down alleyways. I grew increasingly aware that, to understand the dynamics of violence, it was necessary to understand these community dynamics, and the way malandros are entwined in them. On the few occasions I did stay in the barrio, I stayed with people I trusted. In Catia, I stayed with clerics and in a hospital, in Cumaná, I stayed with a trusted friend. In all, it needs to be remembered that violence is still relatively rare, and disproportionately affects people that expose themselves to it through their lifestyles, which brings me to the much more complicated issue of engaging with malandros.

Among malandros, I was certainly in more danger than any other place, but there were still measures I took to look after my own safety, such as not staying beyond dusk and not accepting invitations to parties. I always ensured my gatekeepers knew where I was. Having been introduced by these gatekeepers, these people were also very protective of me. The ex-malandro and cleric I discussed previously were particularly helpful in this regard, these boys would not have wanted to offend them. Further, being a woman, and perhaps also being a foreigner, certainly helped me on these instances. Sadly, as many boys confided, young men always garner suspicion, just entering another barrio can make them a suspect and have them shot. Arguably this is much less the case for women and I certainly never experienced this type of enquiries in any of the barrios I entered, partly because I was often accompanied and always introduced by trusted locals. And as I started attending more, I gained these boys' trust too. They knew I was uncomfortable around guns, and did their best to hide them from me. I never pressed for their co-operation, e.g. with the semi-structured interviews. I believe I gained substantial trust through making the research exercise a conversation, rather than an interview as such. These boys were incredibly interested in life in Europe (although they often had difficulty locating it away from the US) and we exchanged stories more than I extracted them. We talked about the rarity of murders in Europe and things like legal marihuana, which incited



them to tell their own stories. In all, this type of research is a delicate balance between obtaining trust and staying away from any more potential danger than being around malandros already puts you in. Turning down invitations to parties, for instance, meant that I was not exposed to the violence that often occurs at these parties, but also meant I always remained an outsider.

There were only three times I actually felt in danger, and only one of those times was in the company of malandros. One instance was when I turned a corner in the barrio and suddenly saw two police officers with their guns drawn, ready to shoot. My heart started racing and I instinctively looked for cover, until I realised everyone else was carrying on as normal, ignoring the officers. This in itself taught me a lot about the normalisation of violence in these spaces, issues I address in a little more detail in Chapter 8. The other time was outside hospital as two bodies had been brought in, and family members of one of the dead were looking for revenge. In a scuffle outside someone suddenly pulled a gun, I panicked and sprinted inside, in what felt like milliseconds, much to the amusement of security guards whom I laughed at my 'gringa', American, panic, and even whiter face than I already had for days to come. Another time was with the malandros in Cumaná. I usually avoided going late at night, but on this occasion, just a week or so before the end of my fieldwork, I had stayed till around 9.30pm. People were getting drunk and boisterous, showing me their guns. It was not until my gatekeeper called to check where I was, I realised I was putting myself in unnecessary danger. Where at the start of fieldwork, I was perhaps overly cautious, towards the end, and as occasion upon occasion turned out fine, I may have been exceedingly inattentive and it was probably good to be able to return home to put things in perspective.

There are also a number of ethical issues and biases around asking people about their involvement in violence. These issues are related to respondents' honesty, memory and inclination to give socially desirable answers (ICVS, 2011; Lee and Stanko, 2003). A number of precautions can avoid some of the biases inherent to violence research, but these biases are always present. Some precautions include conducting these interviews away from others, repeatedly stressing confidentiality and impartiality, and the use of fully anonymised interviewing techniques through audio-assisted PDAs (Thornberry and Krohn, 2000). The use of PDAs was more or less out of the question for me, as carrying this equipment in the barrio would have put me in additional danger<sup>92</sup>. Nevertheless, I always asked to conduct the interview in

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<sup>92</sup> This issue also prevented me from using visualisation programmes for gathering network data, which meant more work recording and transcribing the data into various data matrices required for network

private. Some people did not oppose to others remaining present, which may have affected their answers, although some did offer detailed descriptions of their involvement in violence even in the presence of others. Further, before any questions on violence, I always stressed the importance of being honest and repeatedly emphasised the confidentiality of people's responses, and I feel that most respondents were indeed responding honestly. On the few occasions I found inconsistencies, I returned to clear these up. This was facilitated by the research environments, people in hospitals and prison often stayed there for a long time.

In all, perhaps partly because I repeatedly stressed the reasons for these questions and so many respondents had been personally affected, people did not have many problems with my questions on violence, apart from the ones asking for details of people they may have had conflicts or violent interactions with, which respondents generally found more intrusive and did not like to answer. All people, including malandros, were concerned for the security situation, and understood the importance of my research. My accent and appearance helped establish that I was not linked to anyone local, whether police or political. In all, people had little reason to hide things from me. Nevertheless, people may have been motivated to make a different impression on me and conceal their full involvement in violence, an issue all research on violence encounters.

I tried to limit inducing stress or anxiety in respondents by not including questions on violence that may be particularly sensitive, such as sexual violence. Nevertheless, two women shared this information with me spontaneously. These instances, and the group discussions, where violence was discussed relatively openly, indicate that talking about experiences of violence may often be cathartic rather than stressful. As mentioned I tried to offer some consolation through a hug and expressions of sympathy and referred them to other instances where I could.

Using the tape recorder did not seem to make people feel uncomfortable, only a few people refused to let me use it, which I of course obliged. I had the impression the tape recorder often made people feel important rather than uncomfortable, some malandros thought it quirky, although they did not like me taking pictures. 'Hey, it's like National Geographic', one said. 'Que arrecho', how cool, indicating they thought it was something of a spectacle.

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analysis. It also meant I was unable to double check some discrepancies that were only apparent after data entry, e.g. non-existing relationships between family members.

There is of course also the issue of hearing about violence, and whether the researcher should take action and report these instances to the police. Unfortunately, in Venezuela's climate of police corruption, reporting would not necessarily have much effect. There was not much I could do with these stories, which was perhaps also why people shared them so voluntarily. I never condoned the acts people talked about, and tried not to judge, I always repeated that I just wanted to understand them. Importantly, people that had killed did not condone homicide themselves, as will become clear in Chapter 7. Malandros in particular have strong morals about violence against women, children and what they see as innocent people. They kill for, in their eyes, valid reasons. Nevertheless, these stories often had a strong impact on my own emotional well-being, I had many nightmares during fieldwork and found it difficult to engage once I returned, an issue I will return to in the next section.

All participants were given an information sheet with my and the university's contact details (also in Appendix 2), which certainly helped establish trust in some contexts. They were always promised anonymity and all data in this thesis were indeed fully anonymised, and cannot be linked back to any individual. I also gave people with whom I conducted an individual interview the option to look over it and retract any information. The few people that asked for transcripts of their interviews were sent these for approval, which was always granted. I also hope to return to the field to share my data with participants.

In the next section I reflect on some other issues, particularly regarding my own position and how that affected the data that were collected.

#### **4.4.2 Reflexivity**

*Llevo franela negra, cara gringa*  
*I'm wearing a black shirt and an American face*

As a female, white middle-class foreigner I had an undeniable influence on the data I collected. Confidence was often hard-negotiated, but I feel that my appearance opened more doors than it shut. Though often denied, my skin colour remained symbol of my other-ness. In the barrio, I stood out immediately. The introductory quote is a text message I once sent to someone I was about to meet for the first time to recognise me. It was sent and received humorously, but reflects the intricacies of my position in Venezuela, and particularly its barrios. My face spelled 'gringa' (meaning 'US citizen' or 'foreigner' more broadly), long before my accent. Attitudes towards Americans in particular, and foreigners in general are sometimes hostile. Government

officials in particular were often reluctant to co-operate. This thesis is written testimony of the considerable effects of political and class polarisation and the historical lack of transparent institutions on people's lives; it should be no surprise my own data collection experiences were affected by institutional arbitrariness and polarisation which have dramatic effects on the availability and dissemination of reliable data. Obtaining data on violence was no small feat, and impossible on my first visits to Venezuela. Officially, these data have not been published since 2004. Further, where these data are available, their reliability is often questionable. I was witness to a number of unusual situations, e.g. police recruits themselves conducting victimisation and perception surveys (including perceptions of the police). Within the police, there is no unified data collection system and even official data vary between agencies<sup>93</sup>. It was only the opening up of a dedicated research team at UNES that allowed me access to these data in Catia. In Cumaná I harassed the local investigative police force repeatedly for lower-level data. I was invited to a core team meeting and told face-to-face they were very interested in my research and ready to co-operate, only to be left with nothing several follow-up emails, request letters, phone calls and hours waiting at reception later. These situations lead to frustration and uncountable lost hours and days, yet worked in my advantage too; when people took a liking to me they often shared the data they had regardless of institutional prescriptions. I did get some access to some data for Cumaná, through a police officer in a different office. Similarly, access to prison in Caracas was denied on grounds of a national directive not to let foreigners into prison after high-profile riots and disturbances in previous years. In Cumaná, access was granted, then denied again, then granted when I submitted my request to a new director. Insistence sometimes works, sometimes it does not. This arbitrariness and uncertainty maintains a system of personal favours and institutional shortcuts. Requesting data often felt like asking for personal favours. I often had to be creative, and above all, patient, just like Venezuelans. If anything, these experiences helped me understand and put into perspective their daily lives.

Although formal institutions were often weary of my intentions, I strongly feel other people went out of their way to explain and introduce me to things Venezuelans would take for granted. I was not afraid to ask for clarification if I did not understand a word or reference. We often joked about Venezuelan habits comparing and contrasting them to e.g. the punctuality of Europeans. People enjoyed asking me about how they differed from us and were happy to offer me their local insights, almost in exchange. The climate of polarisation has also generated a

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<sup>93</sup> See also chapter 3 for differential practices for recording data.

distrust of government-sponsored research. As I could not be clearly linked with either band<sup>94</sup> expectations were perhaps more manageable. Whether they felt sorry for me, being alone in a dangerous foreign country, wanted to impress me or even sleep with me, most people I met were also really interested in my research topic, and had a strong opinion on the violence that seems to be slowly suffocating their society. For people in the centres, the stories of my experiences in the barrio opened a world they themselves have often never entered.

Venezuela also remains a strongly gender-polarised world; women do female things, men masculine things. Men have to be strong and women should look pretty and after the household. There is an absolute respect for the mother figure, but disdain for ordinary women, sometimes termed 'bochinches' that drink, smoke and neglect their households. Men do not often play a role in the household, but do need to provide and protect. It is sometimes expected people have several amorous relationships, to the extent people did not really look up when I started asking whether they had a lover as well as a partner. Personally, hardly disguised sexual advances from random people on the street as well as interviewees (regardless of power positions), were often difficult to deal with, but I learned to ignore them or talk of a very protective boyfriend. Not taking people up on their advances sometimes garnered respect, other times made them try harder. In all, men were often much keener to speak to me and probably tried to impress me more. Women were often quite suspicious and withholding to start with (depending on whom had introduced me), but soon dropped their guards, laughing, joking and sharing, Venezuelan style.

As an endnote, fieldwork was also very emotional. Up to today I find myself emotional when thinking about the stories of pure desolation and intense fear; stories that often do not attain their full dimensions on paper, disjointed from the people that put them into words. These were stories of extreme violence, multiple deaths, and, perhaps most of all, having no one to turn to. I myself coped with support of my flatmate, whom sadly passed away since, and other friends I made out there, who took me out for 'cerveterapia', necessary chats over a cold beer. Nevertheless, the true horror really dawned on me back in the relative security of home, as I sat transcribing the details of these stories in the cold and comparatively desolate spaces of the Global North. Anyone's daily concerns, my own PhD even, seemed futile in the face of

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<sup>94</sup> I soon learned to answer the unavoidable question of political affiliation – whether 'I was chavista or opposition?' – with an evasive though relatively satisfactory for both sides 'I can't really comment as I don't know Venezuela that well, we hear a lot of good and bad things about Chavez abroad, I'm here for you to tell me what it is really like'

Venezuela's daily realities. I was lucky enough to have a scholarship that allowed me some financial leverage to return to the UK to continue writing up. Many in the PhD community at Sussex went through similar things on fieldwork, which helped put things in perspective. In all, the emotional consequences of this type of fieldwork should not be underestimated. A good support network is incredibly important in curtailing some of these effects.

Nevertheless, fieldwork was also fun and exciting, and more than anything, eye-opening. Observing how people cope and continue to laugh and joke among sheer adversity, having drawn a birth ticket to any particular Venezuelan barrio, changed my perspective on life dramatically.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This chapter described the different methods I used to collect a wide variety of data on violence, inequality and people's relationships. It outlined my choice for collecting data in two different cities that vary substantially in terms of inequality, and the use of mixed methods that offer distinct perspectives on violence and people's relationships. I also devoted some attention to ethical concerns and possible limitations of these strategies as well as my own position. In the next chapters I analyse these data in further detail, applying the theoretical perspectives that were outlined in Chapter 2. I start in Chapter 5 with evaluating how barrio residents' relationships reflect their real and perceived opportunities as well as informal social control mechanisms, two aspects of people's relationships that are often considered important in theorising about inequality and violence. In Chapter 6, I look at how these relationships might influence the effects of inequality on individual-level involvement in violence, and in Chapter 7 I evaluate in much more detail the data I collected from malandros, to explore the dynamics of the violence they use.

## CHAPTER 5 NETWORKS, OPPORTUNITIES AND SOCIAL CONTROL IN THE BARRIO

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at how barrio dwellers' actual relationships, rather than their abstract communities, provide them with opportunities, expectations and informal social control. Chapter 2 showed that traditional perspectives on violence assume a lack of opportunities, a discrepancy between these opportunities and expectations, or a lack of informal social control in lower-class communities makes these communities more susceptible to violence. Anomie perspectives (Merton, 1938; Agnew, 1992) suggest that inequality can leave people feeling they cannot achieve the goals projected in society. This gap between opportunities and expectations, rather than a lack of opportunities as such, then generates motivations to engage in violence. Social disorganisation perspectives (Sampson and Groves, 1989) suggest neighbourhood-level relationships can mitigate the effects of inequality by providing informal social control over the behaviour of its residents. While such approaches offer interesting insights they also face certain limitations. Empirical tests of these perspectives often rely on aggregate administrative boundaries that do not necessarily reflect the interest of their theoretical assumptions. As was discussed in Chapter 3 the aggregate income distribution in Venezuela does not tell us much about people's opportunities, expectations or informal social control mechanisms. It also showed administrative boundaries do not reflect the more salient boundary between the centre and the barrio<sup>1</sup>, where most of Venezuela's deadly violence is concentrated. These limitations can be overcome through the use of more micro-level approaches that focus more closely on people's actual, everyday interactions and relationships.

More relational perspectives look at how inequality makes violent identities attractive and meaningful, without necessarily making assumptions about individuals (Young et al., 2008). They do not try and explain differential levels of violence, nor why people use more violence than others, but look at the construction and meaning of violent identities. Masculinity theories, for instance, suggest violent masculinities offer masculine power that provides distancing from feared, weak or female identities (Messerschmidt, 2005; Vigil, 1988). Like other perspectives, these perspectives acknowledge the importance of unequal opportunity structures, but look at how they generate meaning rather than motivations. Although they thus make similar assumptions about the effect of unequal opportunity structures, more relational perspectives

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<sup>1</sup> I use centre to refer to traditionally higher-class areas, whereas barrio refers to informally constructed and traditionally lower-class areas. I explain this in more detail below.

make fundamentally different assumptions about the potentially mitigating effect of strong relationships. Where social disorganisation perspectives assume strong neighbourhood ties can mitigate the effects of inequality through instilling informal social control, perspectives that look at people's actual interactions and relationships suggest that strong ties can generate violence, particularly where there is ambiguity about people's positions and where conflict avoidance is difficult. These perspectives see violence itself as a form of social organisation and informal social control (Baumgartner, 1988; Black, 1983; Gould, 2003).

In line with such approaches and rather than trying to collect representative data within abstract boundaries, this chapter aims to provide insight into the dynamics of the *barrio*, and particularly those aspects of *barrio* residents' lives that are often seen to be conducive to higher levels of violence. It uses personal network and qualitative rather than representative data. At one level this limits my ability to say anything about differences in homicide rates, but it does offer a detailed understanding of conditions in the *barrio*. I cannot test macro-level theories, but I can explore some of their assumptions, by looking at people's personal networks as concrete reflections of their opportunities, expectations and informal social controls.

Overall, this chapter shows that *barrio* dwellers have little access to formal opportunities in their networks and also feel disadvantaged, although they do not necessarily feel worse off than their interaction networks. These findings could be interpreted as tentative evidence that some *barrio* residents may indeed be motivated to use violence, or that violent identities provide meaning under these conditions. Nevertheless, there is little evidence *barrio* dwellers are less subject to informal social control. They have strong, dense relationships, which offer plenty of informal social control. The chapter therefore questions the relevance of looking for indicators of community disorganisation. In looking for community-level processes that can provide informal social control over residents, social disorganisation perspectives ignore that violent identities can also provide informal social control, particularly where formal social control is absent or perceived inadequate.

In what follows, I first pay some more attention to the particulars of the personal network approach used here, justifying this methodology by showing people's interaction networks are not necessarily confined to their neighbourhoods. An important and salient boundary, however, is that between the *barrio* and the centre. Subsequent sections explore, first, how these personal networks reflect *barrio* residents' access to opportunities and their expectations and, second, their informal social control mechanisms.



### 5.1.1 Personal network data

*Durable patterns within the social world are durable because they are constantly reproduced and preserved within interactions.*

(Crossley, 2010, p.32)

Network research sees interactions and relationships as the building blocks of macro-level structures. People's relationships and interactions, rather than their attributes, generate observable, durable patterns in the social world (Crossley, 2010). Personal network data allow for the evaluation of how macro-level inequalities are reflected in people's relationships. Although they are individual-level data they reflect the boundaries of society as a whole. Such data thus offer an unparalleled connection between the micro- and macro-level, by showing across and between which boundaries people's daily interactions occur.

Network theory makes a distinction between relationships within horizontal boundaries (bonds), those crossing horizontal boundaries (bridges) and those crossing vertical boundaries, or explicit power gradients in society (links) (Lin, 1999; Smith, 2009). These boundaries differ from one context to the next. In Venezuela, for instance, a salient vertical boundary is that between the *barrio* and the centre. It is well-known that people tend to interact more comfortably and readily with similar people, within and between horizontal boundaries, a social phenomenon also referred to as homophily (Lin, 2002; McPherson et al., 2001). Bonds and bridges are thus often stronger relationships, as people interact more comfortably with similar people. Relationships that cross salient boundaries (links) are often weaker, but important for access to new ideas and opportunities. Strong ties offer social support, but little access to new ideas and opportunities. The composition of people's personal networks is thus important for people's exposure to new ideas and opportunities. The structure of personal networks, the relationships between people in the network, is important for the spread of information and ideas in these networks. Information spreads more rapidly in dense networks where there are many connections between the people (or alters) that make up the network.

Chapter 2 made reference to previous studies that have used personal networks, here I briefly expand on those studies that are important in this chapter. Barry Wellman is often seen as one of the pioneers of personal network research. In a now classic study of social support networks in Toronto (1979), he takes issue with perspectives that argue community is lost in modern societies. He shows instead, that people's communities are no longer confined to the neighbourhood but that personal networks, rather than abstract neighbourhoods, represent

people's real 'personal communities' (1979, 1999). Other researchers have evaluated these personal communities in a variety of contexts, in the US (Lee and Campbell, 1999; Roman et al., 2012), France (Ferrand et al., 1999) and Holland (Van Eijk, 2010), to name but a few. Studies that have evaluated these personal communities in the Latin American context do often observe strong neighbourhood ties. Espinoza (1999) explored personal networks of 300 respondents in two poor neighbourhoods in Santiago, Chile, showing that people are reliant on strong, but predominantly local ties that limit their integration into wider society. Marques (2012) used personal networks to explore the networks of the 361 poor and 30 middle-class individuals in São Paulo and Salvador, Brazil. He finds these networks to be diverse in terms of size and spheres of sociability, but observes a strong localism, many of his respondents' contacts live in the same neighbourhood, at least for the poor. He does not observe a strong localism among middle-class respondents.

Personal network data offer a unique perspective on all of the theoretical perspectives mentioned above, by seeing their relationships rather than states or neighbourhoods as the basis for people's opportunities, expectations and informal social controls. They help us explore the core assumptions of these theories in rich detail. First, they help us engage with anomie and strain theories that assume a discrepancy between people's opportunities and their expectations pushes people into violence. Research has shown time and again that people's networks are important for access to job opportunities (Granovetter, 1973; Lin, 2002; Lin and Erickson, 2008). Network data thus help us evaluate the opportunities embedded in people's relationships, rather than their neighbourhoods. Secondly, a particular strand of strain theories (relative deprivation theory) assumes strain results from negative comparison with a reference group, but have difficulty conceptualising this reference group. Using personal network data, it is possible to evaluate relative deprivation in comparison to people's interaction networks, conceiving of these networks (rather than abstract neighbourhoods) as their reference group and the basis for their expectations. Third, personal network data help us engage with perspectives that assume people's relationships mitigate connections between inequality and violence. In the criminological literature, strong, cohesive ties<sup>2</sup> are often assumed to provide informal social control. In contrast, more relational perspectives suggest strong, dense ties can generate violence, particularly where there is frequent contact and ambiguity about people's

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<sup>2</sup> More recent perspectives, e.g. collective efficacy suggest there also needs to be a willingness to activate these ties. Nevertheless, they still see social cohesion as a prerequisite for informal social control as I will explore below.

positions. Network data can help us disentangle these perspectives by looking at informal social control mechanisms embedded in their relationships.

The Venezuelan case makes personal network research relevant on another level. Chapter 3 showed that the state has traditionally had little presence in the *barrio*. The security situation, but also formal job and housing scarcity often make people (if only temporarily) reliant on significant others for the provision of jobs and services such as childcare and even housing. In the centre, the state is much more present and remaining uncertainties are more frequently dealt with by private markets. People often have money to pay for private education, health and security. People in the *barrio* are in many ways much more subject to uncertainty, relying on informal connections for housing, work, and even physical security.

Chapter 4 described the methodology and sample selection used to collect the data in rich detail. It is, however, important to reiterate a few limitations of the data. On top of qualitative interviews and observations, I conducted semi-structured network interviews with 45 respondents. As my research focussed on relational dynamics in the *barrio*, the vast majority (42) of respondents were *barrio* dwellers. Further, because I interviewed people on the streets and in public hospitals, this sample is potentially biased towards the poorer sections of these communities. It was also important to have some form of comparative example with higher-class respondents living in the centre. Although only three higher-class individuals living in the centre completed a network survey, these respondents' networks end up providing a striking contrast to the networks of *barrio* dwellers and give us a much deeper insight into the dynamics of the *barrio*. As in Chapter 3, I use 'centre' and 'barrio' to refer to a subjective class difference between relatively central, serviced and higher-class areas and relatively poorer, informally constructed and lower-class *barrios*. This is not to say all people in the centre are rich, or all people in the *barrio* are poor, on the contrary, income differences may be increasingly felt within the *barrio* rather than between the *barrio* and the centre. Nevertheless, these differences reflect durable inequalities that, as we will see in this chapter, are continuously reproduced by a lack of interaction between them.

This is an exploratory research exercise, where the boundaries of respondents' networks were as important as their content, so I did not set a limit on the significant others respondents could mention. I used a contextual name generator similar to Marques (2012), which explores people's contacts in a variety of contexts, but makes it harder to set a limit on the amount of contacts people can mention (see Chapter 4 p. 104). The networks explored here thus vary in size from

11 to 46, with a mean of 22. These differences in network size are particularly relevant for comparisons between higher-class respondents and barrio dwellers. The three higher-class respondents mentioned more significant others, on average<sup>3</sup>. Some differences may thus be partly due to differences in network size. Future research should carefully consider the advantages and disadvantages of letting people name an unlimited number of significant others. In all, the trends and findings reported here are indicative rather than representative. I used one-way ANOVA analyses to test whether any differences in means between classes were significant, but these tests should be interpreted with suitable care given these sample sizes. Nevertheless, the findings in this chapter are corroborated by qualitative research data and reflect some important issues that can be taken on board in future research.

### **5.1.2 Worlds apart; neighbourhood boundaries and class limits**

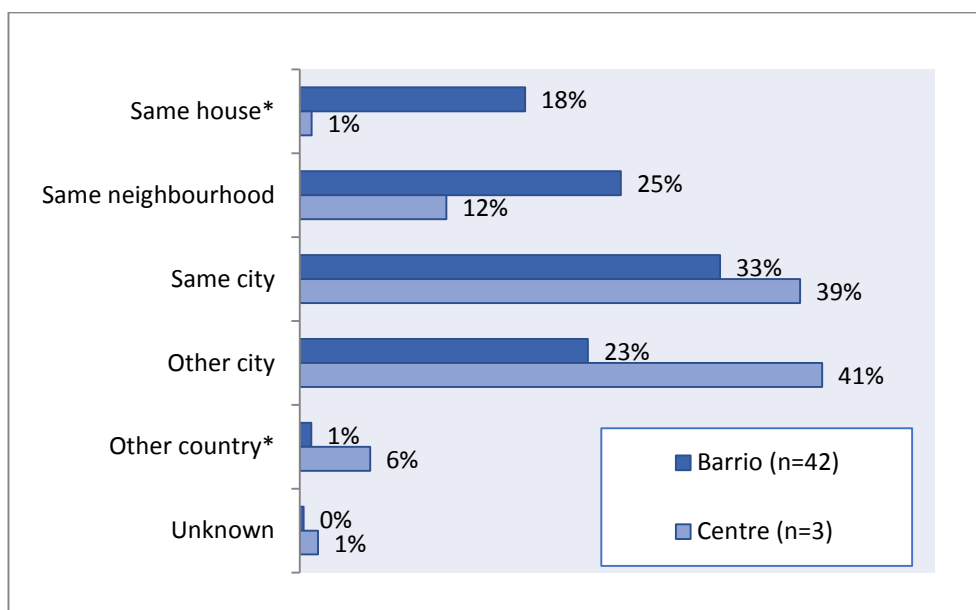
This section validates looking at respondents' interaction networks over and beyond abstract neighbourhood boundaries, showing these interaction networks often cross neighbourhood boundaries. Nevertheless, they do not often cross class boundaries, as we will see below.

Figure 5-1 first shows the composition of respondents' interaction networks by proximity<sup>4</sup> of their contacts, making a distinction between the networks of barrio dwellers and higher-class respondents.

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<sup>3</sup> The three higher-class respondents mentioned an average of 29 contacts, higher than the overall average of 22. Marques (2012) also found networks of middle-class respondents to be larger overall than those of lower-class respondents. Whereas we might interpret this as indicative that these higher-class respondents have larger networks, and consequently perhaps more diverse resources as Marques suggests, in this study this is based on just three respondents and it may be they just mentioned more people.

<sup>4</sup> I included Caracas' satellite cities (e.g. Guarenas/Guatire, los Valles del Tuy, la Guaira) under 'other city' as they can be quite far removed and people do often see these as different cities. This differs from Figure 5-2 that is not meant as a reflection of proximity, but class. I used the category 'other city' there only for contacts where respondents said e.g. Valencia, or Maturin without specifying a neighbourhood. Caracas' satellite cities are listed there as a separate 'class' category as they are not informally constructed like the barrio, nevertheless they house many former barrio residents.

**Figure 5-1 Composition of personal networks by proximity of alters and class of respondents (N=45)**

**\*Difference between classes significant at  $p=.05$**

From the figure it is clear that barrio residents' contacts do not necessarily live locally. On average, well over half (57%) of their networks are composed of people that live in different neighbourhoods (33%), different cities (23%) or even different countries (1%). Nevertheless, these findings do not quite replicate the dispersed personal communities that are often found in the global North. In his classic study of personal communities of East Yorkers, Wellman (1979) found only 13% of these people's contacts lived in the same neighbourhood. Other researchers have replicated these findings. For instance Van Eijk (2010) found that just 17% of ties in three Rotterdam neighbourhoods were local. In this sample, on average, over two fifths (43%) of the significant others barrio residents mentioned do live in the same neighbourhood, of which almost one fifth (18%) live in the same house. These findings are more in line with Marques' (2012) and Espinoza's (1999) findings among the poor in São Paulo and Salvador, Brazil, and Santiago, Chile. Marques found 32% of poor respondents' contacts lived in the same area, whereas for middle-class respondents this was just 5%. Espinoza found 63%

**Picture 5-1 consecutive layering of barrio homes, Caracas 2012**



of people's contacts lived close by, within 3 blocks of themselves<sup>5</sup>.

Barrio residents in particular live much closer together than their counterparts in the centre. The self-constructed spaces of the barrio are almost literally expandable, and houses have grown as

**Picture 5-2 Space in the centre, Caracas 2012**



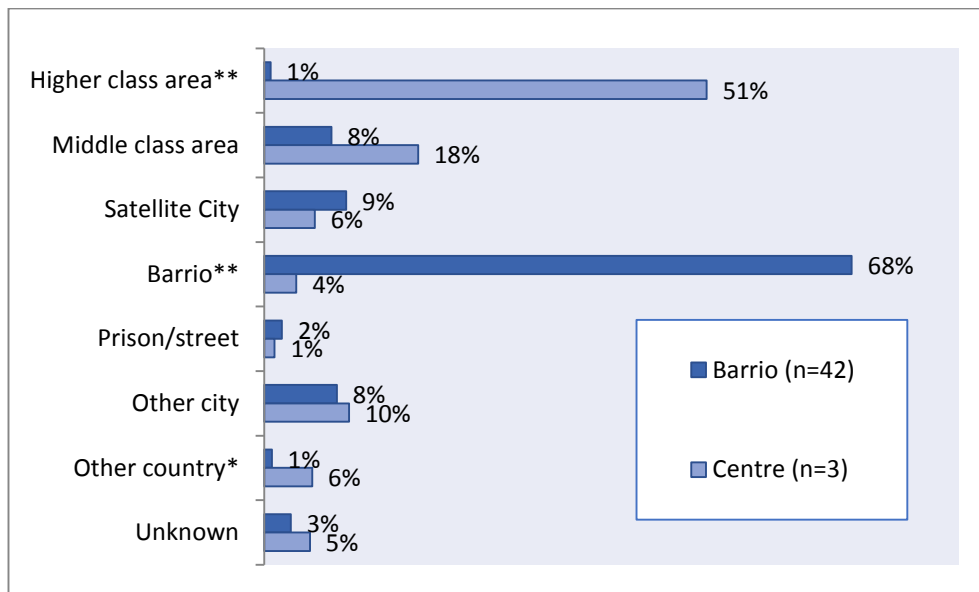
one generation built on top of the next (see Picture 5-1). The spaces of the centre are much more distant (see Picture 5-2); only 1% of contacts of higher-class respondents live in the same house, and only 12% in the same neighbourhood. These class differences are reflective of diverging interaction patterns that will be discussed in more detail in section 5.3 below.

Overall, these findings suggest that traditional neighbourhoods may indeed be a less than perfect reflection of people's communities. Although this is truer of higher-class residents for whom 87% of contacts mentioned live in different neighbourhoods to their own. Still, over half (57%) of barrio residents' relationships are with people outside of their own barrio. This emphasises the inherent limitations of macro-level approaches that, too often, are based on the relatively arbitrary spatial divisions of administrative or governmental districts.

Beyond the spatial extent of social relations an even more striking finding emerges from an exploration of respondents' personal networks and class divisions. Respondents' contacts may not necessarily be local in a geographical sense; they are local, however, in the sense that they rarely cross historically entrenched class boundaries. Figure 5-2 also lists people's contacts according to where they live, this time making a distinction between areas based on whether they are traditionally seen to be higher- or lower-class<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> These differences are probably influenced by diverging network sizes. The average size of the networks Marques collected was larger, 50 on average, whereas the average size of networks in Espinoza's study was just 9.

<sup>6</sup> I make a distinction between traditional upper-class areas like Chacao and El Cafetal in Caracas, Parcelamiento Miranda and various gated communities in Cumaná, and more middle-class ones of la Candelaria, el Silencio and los Chaguaramos in Caracas and el Centro in Cumaná. Both types of areas

**Figure 5-2 Composition of personal networks by residence of alters and class of respondents (N=45)**

**\*\* Class difference significant at  $p=.01$**

**\* Class difference significant at  $p=.05$**

This figure shows homophily by type of area is remarkable, on average 63% of people's contacts live in a similar class area to themselves. Over two thirds (68%) of the contacts of barrio residents live in a barrio too. This does not imply that the remaining third tend to live in higher-class areas, in fact less than 1% do. Most of these other contacts live in satellite cities, or middle-class areas. I asked barrio dwellers whether they knew anyone in higher-class areas; in the few cases they said they did, this was a distant relationship, e.g. they stayed in touch with a family where their mother had been a personal servant. The composition of higher-class respondents' networks is almost the exact mirror image of the networks of barrio dwellers. Only 4% of higher-class respondents' contacts live in a traditional barrio, and many of these are people they have a patron-servant relationship with. One higher-class respondent did not know anyone living in a barrio, another mentioned two; one was his live-in maid, the other the gardener in his gated condominium. An important proportion (6%) of upper class respondents' contacts live abroad, possibly reflecting an important evolution<sup>7</sup>.

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distinguish themselves from informally constructed barrios and more recently developed satellite cities, which are centrally planned, but often house former barrio residents.

<sup>7</sup> It is often reported in national media that many upper class respondents' contacts are leaving the country because of the political situation.

In all, we find some overlap in middle-class areas and satellite cities, but very little between higher-class areas and *barrio*. These reflect the durable inequalities described in Chapter 3. This class segregation remains intrinsically linked to patterns of sociability, but also opportunities and capabilities. It reflects a multi-dimensional inequality that is difficult to capture with vertical single-dimensional measures like the Gini coefficient. People in serviced centres traditionally had access to economic and political spoils, and remain seen to be doing better as we will explore below. Importantly, as Figure 5-2 indicates, there are hardly any interactions through which these spoils might be shared. In the absence of the means of the rich, the social life that evolved in the *barrio* was arguably more reliant on informal networks, generating an informal economy and informal social controls.

These findings question the validity of perspectives that conceive geographic neighbourhood boundaries as the basis for inferences about the behaviour of their residents. Further, neighbourhoods may not only be bad reflections of people's interaction networks, people's residences are not always fixed. It was often hard to pin people down to a particular *barrio*. Many live semi-nomadic lives, moving between homes, in often completely different *barrios* of the city, dictated by work, family or love. People living in Caracas' satellite cities in particular are often so far removed from employment opportunities that they are almost obliged to temporarily live closer to work to make it in on time. Moses's (21) situation is telling here – he lived in a little shack he shared with his mum and 9 of his 10 siblings. Only one brother had left the house, moving to his partner's house about 2.5 hours away by public transport, though he also frequently returned to the family home in the course of fights with his partner. During the week, Moses himself often went to stay with his brother as it simplified his commute to work.

The next sections look at how these networks reflect respondents' opportunities, expectations and informal social controls, starting with an evaluation of their opportunities.



## 5.2 Opportunities, informality and strain

Picture 5-3 A typical street scene; mototaxis and a hotdog stand awaiting business, Caracas 2011



This section engages with theoretical perspectives that assume violence is more prevalent in lower-class communities because people have less opportunities to achieve their desired goals. Anomie and strain<sup>8</sup> perspectives suggest a discrepancy between opportunities and expectations generates motivations for violence. Subcultural perspectives assume unequal opportunity structures make violent identities inherently attractive. More relational masculinity theories suggest violent masculinities provide distancing from feared, weak or female identities. This section shows that the boundaries between the barrio and the centre indeed still reflect important differences in objective as well as subjective opportunities. Barrio residents' have little access to formal opportunities in their networks and also feel disadvantaged, on average.

### 5.2.1 Objective opportunities

This section explores some objective indicators of respondents' opportunities, first evaluating their own characteristics before moving on to the opportunities embedded in their personal networks. It shows that people in the barrio do have opportunities to earn good money, though these are often in insecure professions. There are also important gender role differences among respondents' contacts, with women more frequently being unemployed and taking care of the household.

#### 5.2.1.1 The informal economy, income and making ends meet

Table 5-1 below shows respondents' broad<sup>9</sup> employment situation, adding a class distinction.

<sup>8</sup> Strain theories are the micro-level variant of anomie theories, in what follows I refer only to strain as my measures are based on micro-level data.

<sup>9</sup> See table 1 in Appendix 1 for a more detailed description.

**Table 5-1 Respondents' employment according to class (N=45)**

|                       | <b>Total</b> | <b>Barrio</b> | <b>Centre</b> |
|-----------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| <i>N</i>              | 45           | 42            | 3             |
| Waged                 | 12 (27%)     | 11 (26%)      | 1 (33%)       |
| • Private sector      | 4 (8%)       | 3 (7%)        | 1 (33%)       |
| • Public sector       | 8 (18%)      | 8 (19%)       | -             |
| Unwaged               | 33 (73%)     | 31 (74%)      | 2 (67%)       |
| • Unskilled labour    | 5 (11%)      | 5 (12%)       | -             |
| • Informal employment | 13 (29%)     | 11 (26%)      | 2 (67%)       |
| • Non-remunerated     | 15 (33%)     | 15 (36%)      | -             |

It shows that only twelve respondents (27%) are in waged employment, eight of which are in the public sector (police, army and government administration). The vast majority (33 or 73%) have no regular wage coming in; they do unskilled labour (5), have informal professions (13), or have no income whatsoever (15). Latter category includes five students and four prisoners, only six respondents are currently out of a job, three of whom are women.

Like other boundaries, these professional boundaries are blurry; many people 'matan tigros', literally 'kill tigers' a typical Venezuelan saying meaning they pick up bits and pieces of work to keep afloat. Martin (31) sells at the emergency entrance of one of Catia's public hospitals. He lives just around the corner and has a relatively well-paid formal job as a butcher too, but in his spare time he brings out his picnic table, spreads out a colourful variety of candies, biscuits and cigarettes (sold by the unit), a coffee thermos and a mobile phone for each network and starts selling. Malandros, people that identify with el malandreo and engage in various delinquent activities, considered their occupation an informal profession too, training for which is received on the streets of the barrio. Like other informal professions, it is not a full-time nor permanent one; some merely top up their earnings in mainstream employment with drug sales or robberies.

Informal employment is not necessarily indicative of class differences; two of three higher-class respondents are also informally employed, testimony to the attractions thereof. Arguably however, neither of them experience the same levels of insecurity as 'buhoneros', street vendors, whom are often looked down upon, although they can make good money. One is a taxi driver, the other a musician who reported the highest earnings of this sample.

There is indeed a fine balance between the insecurities and freedoms offered by informal work. People in informal professions are in no way tied to the state; they have no social security or

benefits<sup>10</sup>, but also pay no taxes (Perazzi et al., 2010). People are not necessarily forced to take these jobs because formal jobs are unavailable, public sector jobs in the police force or army are popular professions, particularly among barrio residents. People often prefer informal jobs as they provide quicker results and the freedom to do whatever they want, whenever they need to. While they might lack long-term job security, there is a feeling that they gain freedom.

Street vendors (buhoneros) in particular have a real taste for opportunities. Bea (52) for instance, gave up her secure job as a secretary to sell 'avena', a typical porridge-like hot drink outside hospital. After all 'the street is free', she vowed. Venezuela is often referred to as the land of opportunities, where people do as they please. It certainly seems easy to start a new business, all you need is a small initial investment, a product and a spot to sell from. And even this may be an overstatement as popular vending areas are the many informal vans, jeeps and minibuses that take people around the cities – people hop on and off selling toothbrushes, stickers, chocolate, lottery tickets – cheap, but necessary things that invariably sell.

Moreover, even waged jobs offer little security - at least two of the 45 respondents had lost their waged, supposedly more secure, jobs within the last month. Adriana (27) had been a police officer in Cumaná, who told me she had been fired for requesting her maternity benefits. Jonathan (18) had been working in a shop in a higher-class shopping centre. Both had had contracts, but were nevertheless easily dismissed, indicative of the precariousness of the professional situation of people in the barrio. Contradictorily, informal sector workers might have most control over their immediate fate; they can sell anything anywhere and sometimes earn more than formally employed people, depending on what they sell and how often they work.

Table 5-2 below shows respondents' reported personal incomes (from their main profession), and whether or not their household income suffices for the household's needs.

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<sup>10</sup> Although they can indeed profit from some of the recently established Misiones, government programmes established by Chávez.

**Table 5-2 Income and making ends meet, according to class of respondents (N=45)**

|  | Total    | Barrio   | Centre  |
|--|----------|----------|---------|
| <i>N</i>   | 28       | 25       | 3       |
| Average personal income**                          | 6,496    | 5,616    | 13,833  |
| <i>N</i>   | 40       | 38       | 2       |
| Does your household income suffice for your needs? |          |          |         |
| Yes, we can save                                   | 21 (53%) | 20 (53%) | 1 (50%) |
| Yes, just  | 8 (20%)  | 7 (18%)  | 1 (50%) |
| No, we have difficulties                           | 9 (23%)  | 9 (24%)  | -       |
| No, we have major difficulties                     | 2 (5%)   | 2 (5%)   | -       |

**\*\* Class difference significant at  $p=.01$**

People in unwaged professions often found it difficult to put an exact number on their monthly earnings, they may not have a clear idea without a monthly pay check coming in. As fifteen respondents were unremunerated, only twenty-eight (62%) reported an income. These reported incomes range from 1,800 to 25,000 Bolivars, with an average of 6,500 and a median of 4,800. This average wage is more than three times the minimum wage<sup>11</sup> of 2,048 Bolivars at the time of fieldwork. Nevertheless, the average incomes of barrio dwellers are significantly lower than those of the three higher-class respondents. Indeed, even if two higher-class respondents are informally employed, they reported a much higher average income of 13,800 bolivars. The sample size does not allow us to draw firm conclusions, but this is potentially indicative of a difference in capabilities.

Perazzi et al (2010) state that ‘the average income in the [informal] sector is lower than the one in the formal economy’. However, in this sample, and excluding higher-class respondents, informal sector workers reported higher average monthly wages (6,200) than those in waged employment (4,800). Especially (moto)taxi drivers and buhoneros can earn a good living. Bea started out selling prepared lunches, but soon turned to less work-intensive and more profitable *avena*. She sells 5 mornings a week from 7am, until all is gone, usually by 11am. After paying for ingredients, she takes home the full profit and makes around 12,000 bolivars a month, enough to support a three-person household (her husband is a contractor and between jobs).

<sup>11</sup> High inflation urges frequent revisions of this minimum wage in Venezuela. Further, it is difficult to give an exchange rate for bolivars due to the currency being pegged at around 4 bolivars to a dollar (more recently revised to 6), generating a vibrant black market in dollars. At the start of my fieldwork, this minimum wage was worth around £220 in black market rates, whereas by the end it was worth just £100.

Malandros report good incomes too. One said he earned 8,000 bolivars a week selling drugs, another malandro estimated to be earning 4,000 per day. Nevertheless, they do not work every day, and some days and weeks are better than others. Those involved in robbery, in particular, might work when they need to, or would like to buy a new pair of shoes, just like buhoneros it is another freelance job. It is likely malandros earn more than police and army officers, whom start out at the minimum wage. Nevertheless they can also top up their incomes informally, as we will see below.

Overall, the average reported income is substantially higher than the minimum wage. Further, Table 5-2 shows almost three quarters (29 or 73%) of respondents, when asked, said their household incomes suffice for their needs. Nevertheless, a sizeable proportion (11 respondents or 28%) say they have trouble making ends meet, all of them barrio dwellers. Two of these, Adriana (27) and Vanessa (21), have major difficulties. Both are not currently working but reliant on other members of their household, with important effects on their perceptions of their quality of life, as I will explore below. Nevertheless, these figures are an indication that the people that reported an income are not necessarily destitute. Most respondents (35 or 78%) live in privately owned property, they do not need to worry about mortgages. Further, most people have large extended families where people contribute as and when is needed. People's networks are important for material security, but also for initial access to opportunities.

#### 5.2.1.2 'Palancas' and gender roles

As in other countries, people often look for inspiration and opportunities in their immediate network. This is reflected in the colloquial term 'palanca' (literally 'lever'), which refers to someone who can help you on the employment ladder, either directly or through their own connections. In Venezuela people do indeed have palancas but they do not always offer opportunities in stable employment. Table 5-3 shows some indicators of the opportunities embedded in respondents' networks.

**Table 5-3 Opportunities embedded in respondents' networks, according to class (N=45)**

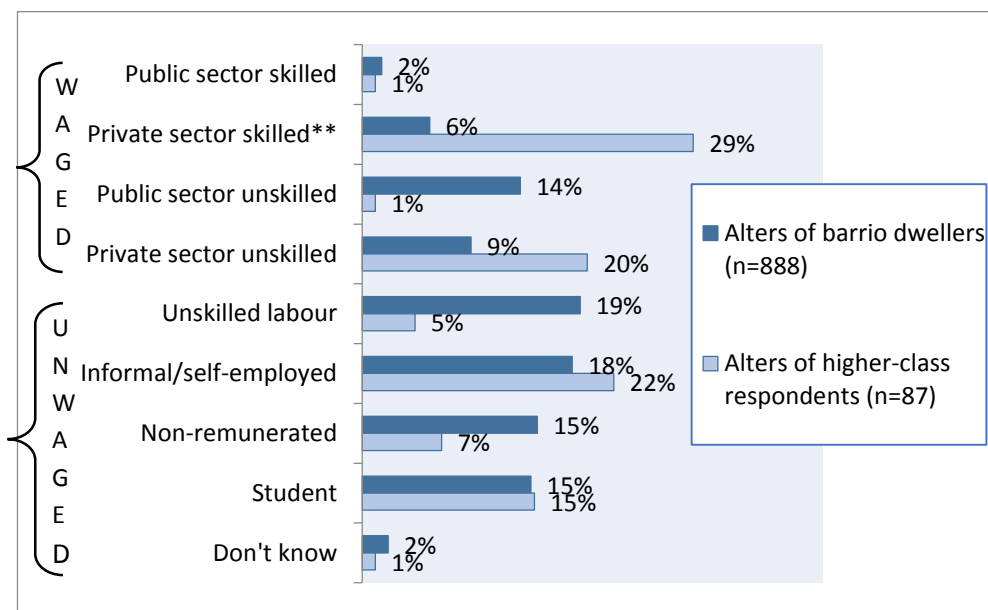
|  | <b>Total</b> | <b>Barrio</b> | <b>Centre</b> |
|--|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| <i>N</i>   | 45           | 42            | 3             |
| Average proportion of contacts in waged employment                               | 33%          | 32%           | 50%           |
| Homophily of job sectors (% of people in same job sector)                        | 32%          | 32%           | 25%           |
| Homophily of waged/unwaged employment (% of people in same employment situation) | 69%          | 70%           | 51%           |

**\*None of these differences are significant at  $p=.05$**

On average, 32% of respondents' contacts work in the same broad sector as they do, rising to 69% if we make a dichotomous distinction between waged and unwaged professions. This means that, for unwaged people, on average, 69% of their contacts are similarly unwaged. Even though two of three higher-class people are informally employed, they appear to have slightly more contacts working in waged professions, although again the small sample size prevents us from drawing firm conclusions.

Figure 5-3 below breaks this down a little further. It shows people's contacts according to their professional sector. It shows that the fundamental job insecurities (and freedoms) explored above are also prevalent in respondents' networks.

**Figure 5-3 Professional sector of alters (n=975), by class of respondents (N=45)**



**\*\* Class difference significant at  $p=.01$**

Over a third (37%) of barrio residents' contacts have unwaged professions (19% in unskilled labour and 18% in informal professions). Almost another third (30%) do not have an income at all (15% non-remunerated, 15% students). Although we cannot draw firm conclusions, higher-class respondents' networks provide an interesting contrast. Nearly half (49%) of the contacts of the people living in higher-class areas receive private sector wages (29% skilled, 20% unskilled), compared to just 15% of the contacts of barrio dwellers. Barrio dwellers generally have little

access to private sector jobs through their contacts. Further, there are also some important gender differences.

Table 5-4 below looks at the opportunities embedded in people's networks from a gender perspective, making a distinction between male and female contacts and showing some important and recurrent gender roles; police and army officers, construction and trades workers, (moto)taxi drivers, malandros and housewives.

**Table 5-4 Job sector of alters, by gender of alters (N=975)**

|                |                              | Male       | Female     |
|----------------|------------------------------|------------|------------|
|                | <i>N</i>                     | <i>508</i> | <i>467</i> |
| <b>WAGED</b>   | Public sector skilled        | 1%         | 2%         |
|                | Private sector skilled       | 10%        | 5%         |
|                | Public sector unskilled      | 12%        | 14%        |
|                | • <i>Police officer</i>      | 5%         | 2%         |
|                | • <i>Army official</i>       | 2%         | 1%         |
|                | Private sector unskilled     | 11%        | 10%        |
| <b>UNWAGED</b> | Unskilled labour             | 25%        | 10%        |
|                | • <i>Construction/trades</i> | 15%        | 0%         |
|                | Informal/self-employed       | 25%        | 12%        |
|                | • <i>(Moto)taxista</i>       | 5%         | 0%         |
|                | • <i>Malandro</i>            | 5%         | 0%         |
|                | Non-remunerated              | 5%         | 25%        |
|                | • <i>Housewife</i>           | 0%         | 19%        |
|                | Student                      | 11%        | 19%        |
|                | Don't know                   | 2%         | 2%         |

This table shows the high non-remunerated percentage among people's contacts is actually concentrated among females, 25% of whom are not working. Only one in twenty (5%) of respondents' male contacts are not currently working. This table also provides an interesting perspective on gender roles. Over one in ten (12%) of respondents' male contacts carry a gun professionally (5% police officers, 2% army officials and 5% malandros), whereas almost one fifth (19%) of their female contacts are housewives. These patterns reflect my observations in the barrio which often feels feminine, especially during the day, when men are often at work. Women take care of the household and often also social life in the neighbourhood. These observations are also supported by looking at overall gender patterns. Just over half (52%) of all respondents' significant alters are male, which is slightly surprising. Given 31 of 45 (69%)

respondents were male, and assuming from the homophily principle that men tend to feel more comfortable with other men, one might have expected a higher proportion of males. That many women were mentioned may be an indication that people get their network fixes, social support in particular, from women. All<sup>12</sup> respondents named their mothers, whereas just 25 listed their biological fathers. Young men growing up in the barrio often live in female worlds where other men are distant, absent characters (Gruson and Zubillaga, 2004). These patterns reflect Vigil's (1988) account of the construction of masculine identities in opposition to feared (female) identities. Some important ways in which barrio residents' male contacts make a living is through joining el malandreo, a Venezuelan gangster identity, the army, or the police force, all institutions in which violence is condoned and exercised on a regular basis.

In this section we have seen that barrio dwellers can indeed make good money although this is often in insecure professions. A closer look at the opportunities embedded in their networks shows they also have little access to more secure professions in their networks, and that many of their female contacts are not working. Nevertheless, these patterns do not imply there is a discrepancy with their expectations. Many theoretical perspectives assume it is a discrepancy with expectations, rather than a lack of opportunities as such that generates motivations for violence. In the next section I evaluate barrio residents' expectations and any discrepancy with their opportunities.

## **5.2.2 Subjective perceptions – expectations, strain and relative deprivation**

Theoretical perspectives on violence often suggest that not people's objective opportunities, but a discrepancy between these opportunities and their expectations generate strain and motivations for violence. Chapter 2 showed that this gap between opportunities and expectations is difficult to evaluate. In this section I explore a number of possible measures, most of which show that there is indeed still evidence for strain among barrio residents, although there is substantial variation across the measures.

### **5.2.2.1 Expectations and strain**

The semi-structured instrument that was used to collect data on people's personal networks also included an open-ended question on respondents' expectations, enquiring what their expectations for the future were. In Chapter 4, I showed how almost two fifths of respondents (19 or 42%) do not have a permanent residence; it should be no surprise that a stable home and

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<sup>12</sup> Even if 6 of these mothers had died and were thus excluded from analyses.



family life often topped the list of expectations. For example when I asked Mateo (29) what he meant by 'having all I want', he responded:

A house, a car. Living quietly. Having a small business, a fast food business or something like that

Semi-structured interview, Mateo, Catia

People often spoke of just wanting to live a good life. Or 'salir adelante', get ahead, referring to continuing on the right track, moving on to succeed in life. Given that many have relatively good incomes, they often feel they can achieve these objectives with time, particularly the men. In contrast to this general feeling among male respondents many of the women in the sample are dependent on others and have few prospects. Adriana (27), for example, has a three-month old baby, just lost her job and is staying with her aunt and four other family members in a dilapidated shack in Cumaná. When I interviewed her, tears of frustration welled up in her eyes as we spread plastic over the worn couch to protect it from incoming rain that poured through the holes in the roof. Similarly, Lara (22) has never had a job, her parents had been malandros and provided for her every need. She now relies on her partner to provide for her and the children. She mentioned she would like to go back to school and get a job one day.

Further, many respondents, especially those recently victimised, said they wanted to move away from the barrio, somewhere more secure and quiet, where they could live in peace and without fear. Many people had been affected by violence, and this physical insecurity may have a substantial impact on people's perceptions, over and above material insecurity. William (31) described how he had been hit in the buttocks as he ran away from the bullets that hit his friend in the head in an apparent retaliatory attack. They had been enjoying some after work beers outside their housing block on a Friday evening. He puts it this way;

It's a case of where you can't go, you can't leave your house, you can't leave your sector. I don't want this for myself, not for my family... [I want to move to] another sector with another type of people where I can live in peace

Semi-structured interview, William, Catia

This may indeed be a difficult expectation to substantiate, given the lack of links between the barrio and the centre in people's personal networks, and an overall housing shortage. Some barrio dwellers had recently moved to satellite cities, but these remain barrio in spirit. Diana (24) has temporarily moved in with her aunt in Ciudad Caribe, a newly constructed city on the outskirts of Caracas. She says people that were moved there 'preserve their barrio mentality, they don't know how to live peacefully with their neighbours'. Many people do indeed want to

distance themselves from the barrio, be different from what they grew up in, as I will explore in a little more detail in Chapter 7.

To be able to situate respondents' expectations more quantifiably, and evaluate any discrepancy with their opportunities, I showed them a ladder with 0 to 10 steps and asked them to imagine this ladder represented the worst possible conditions of life at the bottom, and the best possible conditions at the top. I first asked them what types of people they imagined at either end of this ladder, with widely varying responses. People that had few material or emotional concerns, people that were at peace with themselves, were often seen at the top. Many respondents interpreted this question in terms of occupations, imagining people like entrepreneurs and business owners, police officers, politicians, the president and his circles at the top. We have already seen how barrio residents have little access to the private sector businesses many put on top of their hierarchies. Further, people often see police officers and politicians as abusive of power, they are often called 'uniformed malandros' as they are seen to have the power to do the things malandros do but without the personal consequences and repercussions.

Enrique (24) had also been shot, as thieves got away with his motorbike. He is a popular barber in his neighbourhood, catering to all, including the local malandros. When I asked him for the best possible condition of life, he said:

The CICPC. [Investigative police force]

**Why the police?** Because they make a lot of money, with everything they do, they take a lot of money from people.

**But they don't make that much money?** No, but they for instance, the police officers where I live have expensive cars, they fine people a lot... when they capture murderers, they arrest them and to let them go they ask for 50,000 Bolivars. (...) they let them go as if they didn't do anything.

**And malandros were on ladder 0 right?** Well not necessarily 0, because they sell drugs and that goes well for them, they have plenty of money, they're not on 0 in terms of poverty, but as for living conditions, they live purely incarcerated in the barrio, in a little alleyway (...) everyone is looking for them, other malandros, the police, everyone, they can't leave.

Semi-structured interview, Enrique, Catia

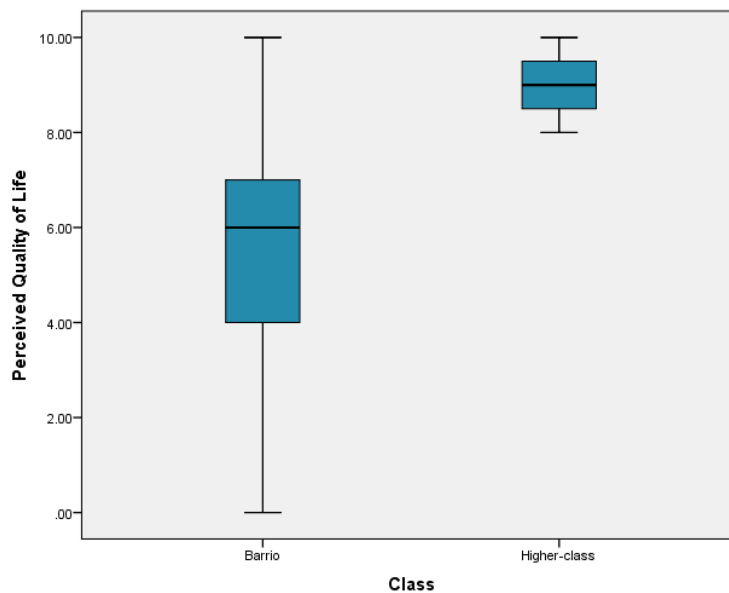
His comments touch upon a fundamental distrust of the police, which we will see further on is an important factor in the prevalence of informal control mechanisms in the barrio.

Like Enrique, many respondents believe malandros are to be found at the bottom, along with people that live in 'ranchos', poorly constructed housing, beggars and, sometimes, buhoneros. Indeed, these informal professions do still tend to be looked down upon, even if previous section

showed they can make good money. Buhoneros themselves would often describe their profession in less laden words, as ‘comerciantes’, merchants. Further, malandros can often command respect in the barrio too, we will explore the power of violent identities in more detail in Chapter 7.

I then asked respondents to situate themselves on this ladder of 0 to 10, a measure of strain<sup>13</sup> used by Baron (2004). It can be seen to reflect whether or not people feel they can or have achieved their expectations, in terms of this general standard of quality of life. Figure 5-4 shows the dispersion of this measure, making a class distinction.

**Figure 5-4 Perceived quality of life by class of respondents (N=45)**



On average, respondents' own perceived quality of life of is 5.6, with a significant<sup>14</sup> class difference that is potentially, keeping in mind there are only three higher-class respondents, indicative of higher levels of strain in the barrio. Barrio respondents position themselves at 5.4 on the ladder, compared to 9 for higher-class respondents. Further, the barrio average hides substantial variation with 19 (or 45% of) respondents placing themselves at 5 or below on the ladder. Three barrio dwellers put themselves at 0 on the ladder. One, Carlos (35), is in prison for a murder he says he never committed. Another, Arturo (24), is a hospitalised drug addict whose groin had become infected after injecting it for lack of other veins. A third, Vanessa (21), is a single, unemployed pregnant girl living in an overcrowded shack on the outermost inhabited

<sup>13</sup> In fact he uses this as an indicator of relative deprivation but as it compares people to a general standard, it is better described as an indicator of strain.

<sup>14</sup> ANOVA ( $F=6.59$ ,  $p=.01$ )

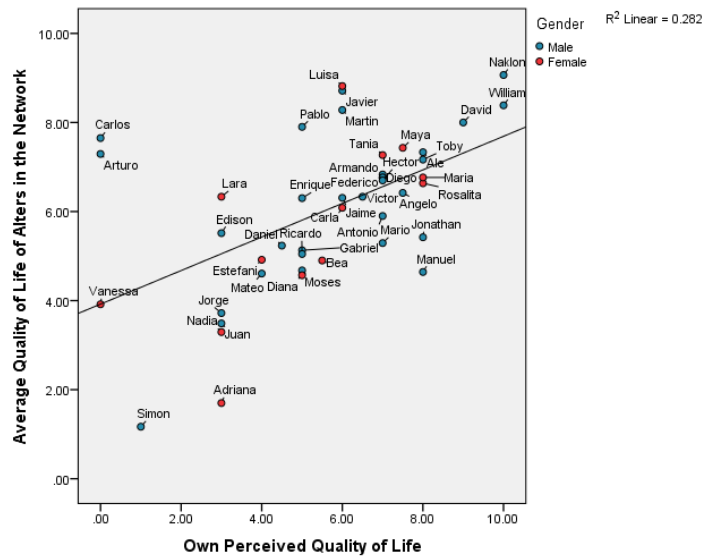
edge of Catia. In contrast, abovementioned William gives himself a 10, even if he wants to move away from the barrio, he feels blessed to have escaped death in the shooting that killed his friend. On average, respondents are 4.4 steps removed from the best possible conditions of life. Overall, there thus seems to be plenty of strain, as reflected in this general standard of quality of life. In the next section I evaluate people's perceived opportunities in comparison to more concrete standards.

#### **5.2.2.2 Relative deprivation**

Relative deprivation theory is a particular strand of strain theories. It suggests these general standards are not as important as people's actual reference groups when it comes to generating their expectations and any subsequent discrepancy with their opportunities. They assume strain results from negative comparison with a reference group.

To examine these ideas I asked people to place each of their contacts on the same ladder of 0 to 10 that they had used for themselves. This encouraged them to evaluate whether they feel their significant others have better life conditions than themselves, and can thus indicate whether they might experience strain resulting from negative comparison to these interaction groups. On average, people place their contacts on a slightly higher scale than themselves, 6 vs. 5.6. There are some interesting differences in quality of life ratings these alters received according to living area and profession. People rated alters that worked in waged sectors 6.8 on average, versus 5.5 for those without formal contracts. Alters living in higher-class urbanisations were rated 8.4 on average, compared to 5.6 for barrio dwellers. Unwaged professions and the barrio do still seem to reflect a poorer quality of life in the eyes of these respondents. In Figure 5-5 I look at the correlation between respondents' own perceived quality of life and the average quality of life they gave their alters.

**Figure 5-5 Correlation between respondents' perceived quality of life and average quality of life of their alters (N=44)**



The correlation is quite strong ( $r=.53$ ,  $p=.00$ ). This suggests respondents do compare themselves to the people in their networks when evaluating their own quality of life, or judge these people based on their own life conditions. Nevertheless, the fitted regression line does not go through the origin, indicating that people perceive others to be doing slightly better than themselves, on average. It is important to note that two outliers, abovementioned Carlos and Arturo, influence this correlation significantly, without them the correlation is much stronger ( $r=.72$ ,  $p=.00$ ) and the fitted regression line does indeed move down. Both respondents were extremely unhappy at the time of their interviews. They both give themselves a 0 on quality of life, but rated their contacts much higher, averaging 7.7 and 7.3, respectively. Adriana, who put herself at 3 on the ladder, still feels she is doing slightly better than her contacts whom she placed at an average of 1.7. On average, respondents position a third (32%) of their contacts on the same position on the ladder as themselves.

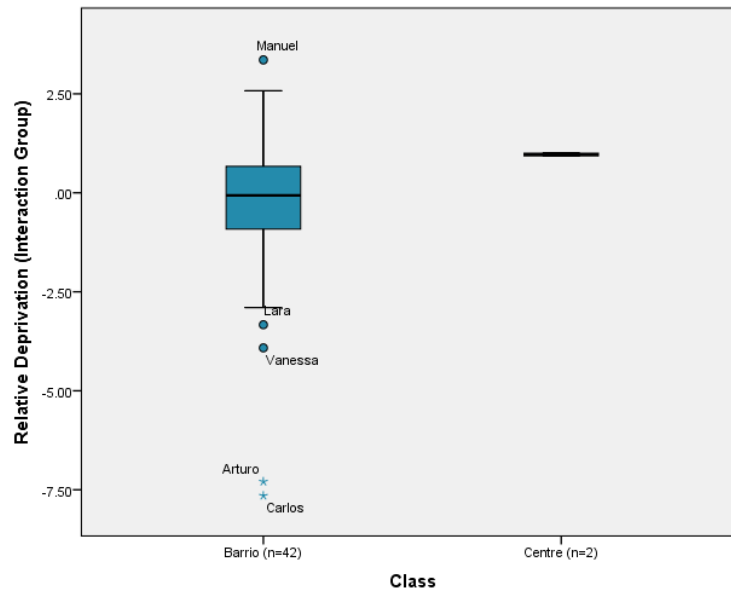
I calculated a relative deprivation measure that compares respondents to their actual interaction group by subtracting their alters' average quality of life from their own. This approach is similar to poverty measurement approaches where the gap between an individual's income and the poverty line is measured, but rather than using an abstract poverty line<sup>15</sup>, I use people's actual interaction groups as a comparative standard. Negative scores indicate people feel they have a lower quality of life than most of their alters, whereas a positive score puts

<sup>15</sup> It may have been interesting to use these contacts' incomes as a comparative standard, but it is difficult to ask people to estimate their contacts' incomes.

them on top of the majority of their interaction network. This measure has an average value of -0.5. People feel on average slightly deprived in comparison to their interaction network, but this ranges from -7.7 to 3.3 and thus hides significant variation.

Figure 5-6 shows the dispersion of this measure, making a distinction between barrio dwellers and higher-class respondents.

**Figure 5-6 Dispersion of relative deprivation in comparison to interaction network by class (N=44)**



The large dispersion is disproportionately influenced by several outliers. In fact half (50%) of barrio dwellers put themselves just 0.7 steps above or below the average of their network, suggesting they do not necessarily feel their quality of life is very different to that of their significant others. Interestingly, three relatively violent people, Manuel, Arturo and Carlos, influence this dispersion disproportionately, but in opposite ways. Manuel feels he has a better quality of life than the average of his interaction network, whereas Arturo and Carlos feel they have a much worse quality of life than their networks. We will look at these people in more detail in the next chapter. Although the higher-class respondents evaluate their own quality of life around one ladder above that of their contacts, this is based on just two respondents as Natalia did not rate her contacts.

### 5.2.3 Opportunities – Summary

This section has shown that looking at people's actual relationships as the basis of their opportunities and expectations offers a distinct perspective on these issues that would have been difficult to appreciate using abstract boundaries. The people in their interaction networks

are more concrete sources of their opportunities and expectations, as people don't necessarily interact with everyone within abstract boundaries. This section also shows the limitations of inequality measures based on incomes, as many of the people in this sample do not have a regular income. In all, this section showed that some respondents earn good money, but this is often in informal professions that are still looked down upon. The majority of the people in their networks also work in unwaged professions, and many of the women in their networks are housewives. The indicators of strain and relative deprivation suggest, overall, people are quite a way off from achieving the best imaginable conditions of life. On average, people also feel slightly worse off than their interaction groups, but there is substantial variation and many people do not feel their quality of life is very different from that of the people in their networks. These findings could be cautiously interpreted as evidence that some people in the barrio may indeed be motivated to use violence, assumptions I will explore in Chapter 6. I will explore whether the substantial variation in strain and relative deprivation measures may be related to respondents' involvement in violence. These findings also support the potential meaning of violent identities, Chapter 7 evaluates in a more detail how these conditions might make violent identities attractive and meaningful.

In the rest of this chapter I will look at how people's relationships might mitigate the effects of inequality, through providing informal social control mechanisms that can keep people from violence, or rather generate violence where there is ambiguity about people's positions.

### 5.3 Informal social control and neighbourhood cohesion

**Picture 5-4 Children playing in the barrio, Caracas 2012**



This section engages with theoretical perspectives that assume people's relationships can mitigate the effects of inequality by providing informal social control. Social disorganisation perspectives assume that strong, cohesive neighbourhood ties can keep people from getting involved in violence (Krohn, 1986). Relational perspectives, in contrast, predict that strong ties among ambiguity about authority may lead to more violence as confrontational social control (Black, 1983). In this section I look at how people's actual relationships provide informal social control. It shows that barrio residents' personal networks are made up of strong ties that do provide social control over their behaviour. I extend these findings to the community level using qualitative data, showing that barrio residents are also subject to informal social control on the neighbourhood level. Irrelevant of social cohesion, the absence of formal authorities in the barrio opens it up to much more ambiguous forms of informal social control. El malandreo, a Venezuelan gangster identity, can be seen to offer informal social control in the vacuum left by the state (see section 3.3.2.4).

#### **5.3.1 Interaction patterns and informal social control**

As we saw in section 5.1.2, a substantial proportion of barrio residents' contacts live in the same neighbourhood. Here I will go deeper to consider the levels of contact that occur between individuals as well as the fact that many of the respondents' contacts tend to know one another. This, I will argue, has important effects on social control; these contacts can easily keep a close eye on respondents. Further, the dense relationships restrict barrio dwellers' potential to avoid any conflicts.



### 5.3.1.1 Strength of relationships

Table 5-5 below shows some indicators of the strength of respondents' relationships, making a distinction between the relationships of barrio dwellers and those of the higher-class respondents.

**Table 5-5 Indicators of the average strength of respondents' relationships, by class (N=45)**

|  | <b>Total</b> | <b>Barrio</b> | <b>Centre</b> |
|--|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>N</b>   | 45           | 42            | 3             |
| <b>Average trust (1-5)</b>   | 3.8          | 3.8           | 3.8           |
| <b>Average years known</b>   | 18           | 18            | 16            |
| <b>Average years known<br/>(standardised for respondent's<br/>age)</b> | 0.60         | 0.61          | 0.52          |
| <b>Average proximity</b>   |              |               |               |
| Same house*  | 17%          | 18%           | 1%            |
| Same neighbourhood   | 24%          | 25%           | 12%           |
| Same city  | 34%          | 33%           | 39%           |
| Other city   | 24%          | 23%           | 41%           |
| Other country*   | 1%           | 1%            | 6%            |
| <b>Average frequency of contact</b>                                    |              |               |               |
| Every day*   | 44%          | 46%           | 18%           |
| Every week   | 23%          | 23%           | 35%           |
| Every month*   | 18%          | 17%           | 33%           |
| Less frequently  | 12%          | 12%           | 14%           |

\* Class difference significant at  $p=.05$

On average, respondents trust their contacts substantially. People gave their contacts a score of 3.8 on a scale of 1 (no trust at all) to 5 (trust completely). Almost half (46%) received a maximum score of 5. They have also known their contacts for a long time, 18 years or three fifths (60%) of their lives, on average. We have already seen that many of these people live close to each other. Overall, 42% of respondents' contacts live in the same neighbourhood, of which 17% in the same house. Respondents also have frequent contact with the people they mentioned, they speak to 44% of the contacts they mentioned on a daily basis. These are indeed strong ties that offer social support and also social control; frequent, proximate contact helps people watch over on another as we will see in more detail further on and in Chapter 6.

Fran, a young woman in one of the group interviews recounted an instance where she and her brother had almost been robbed;

We were walking in the alley back home and I saw a guy hiding a bit further up, my brother told me to keep walking, not to be scared, but surely, the guy caught us, hiding his face in his t-shirt and feigning a gun in his hand. But my brother recognised his voice, it was someone he knew! And he told him, dude, are you going to rob us like this? So the guy lowered his t-shirt, apologised and left us alone.

Group interview, female resident, Cumaná

The fact people in the barrio know each other can prevent them from being victimised.

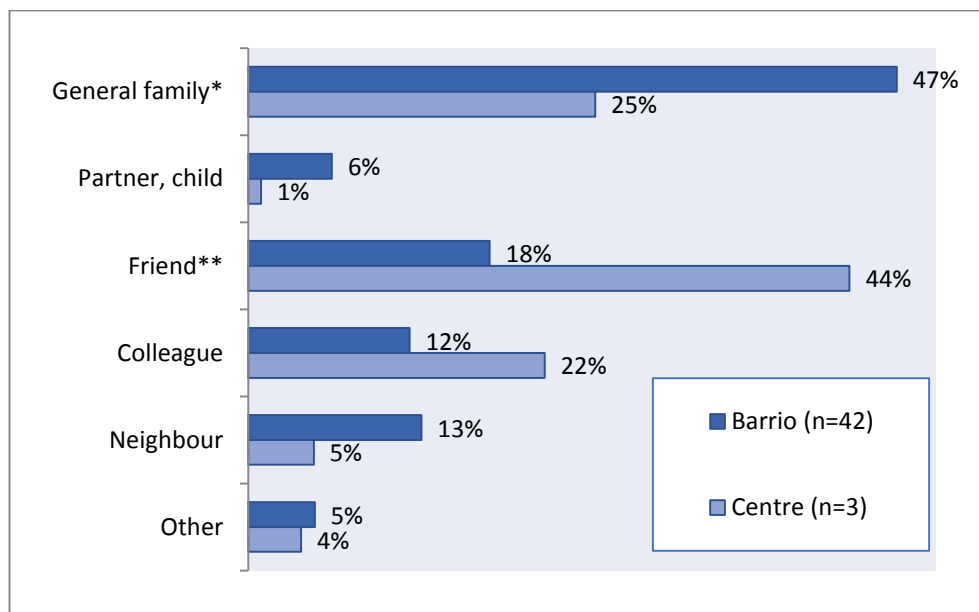
Further, these indicators suggest barrio dwellers' relationships might be stronger than those of higher-class respondents, at least in terms of frequency and proximity of contact. People in the barrio live much closer together. Just under half (46%) of the people barrio dwellers mentioned are people they have contact with on a daily basis, compared to under a fifth (18%) of the contacts of people in the centre. Figure 5-1 (p.121) already showed the composition of respondents' interaction networks by proximity and class, with remarkable differences. Only 13% of higher-class residents' contacts live in the same neighbourhood and just 1% in the same house. Two higher-class respondents live alone<sup>16</sup>, the other lives with just 2 others. Barrio dwellers in this sample live, on average, with 5 others. Almost one fifth (18%) of the people they mentioned live in the same home.

### **5.3.1.2 Spheres of sociability**

Many of these proximate contacts are also family members. Figure 5-7 illustrates the composition of people's networks by relationship type.

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<sup>16</sup> One lives with a live-in servant, who goes home on Sundays. Nevertheless, this respondent did not see this servant as a home companion, telling me he lived alone.

**Figure 5-7 Relationship composition of personal networks by class (N=45)**

**\*\* Class difference significant at  $p=.01$**

**\* Class difference significant at  $p=.05$**

More than half (53%)<sup>17</sup> of barrio dwellers' networks are composed of family members; of which 6% partners or children<sup>18</sup>, and 47% general family members, including (grand)parents, (half-)siblings, aunties, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews. Just under a fifth (18%) are friends, remaining eighths are colleagues (12%) and neighbours (13%). That many family members also live in the same house and thus neighbourhood accounts for the differences in the proportion of neighbours between Table 5-5 and Figure 5-7. Where only 12% are listed as neighbours here, Table 5-5 showed that on average, 43% of barrio dwellers' networks live in the same neighbourhood, but this thus includes a substantial amount of their family members. In network terms this is called 'multiplexity'; one relationship encompasses multiple overlapping roles<sup>19</sup>.

Again, there is a clear, but indicative, distinction between the networks of higher-class people, whom count a higher proportion of friends and also more colleagues among their core network.

<sup>17</sup> This is a larger proportion than Espinoza (1999) and Marques (2012) whom found 38% and 41% family members in the networks of the poor in Chile and Brazil, respectively. Marques collected larger networks overall and Espinoza used a slightly different methodology that was specifically aimed at gathering weaker ties.

<sup>18</sup> Only children 15 or older. The questionnaire specifically asked for contacts that were 15 or older.

<sup>19</sup> I coded people's alters as first relationship – e.g. if people were colleagues and became friends in the process, I coded them as colleagues. This might partly be responsible for networks being so family orientated, as this will always be the first relationship, even though they might also be neighbours and friends.

### 5.3.1.3 Network density

The ties between the people in respondents' networks also reflect barrio residents' strong communities. Whether or not the people in a personal network know each other has important consequences for the spread of information in these networks. Table 5-6 shows the density of these networks, a measure that is derived from the connections between the significant others respondents mentioned.

**Table 5-6 Network size and density, by class (N=45)**

|                     | <b>Total</b> | <b>Barrio</b> | <b>Centre</b> |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>N</b>            | 45           | 42            | 3             |
| <b>Network size</b> | 22           | 21            | 29            |
| <b>Density</b>      | 0.60         | 0.60          | 0.51          |

**\*None of these differences are significant at  $p=.05$**

Network density is inherently dependent on network size. Because there are less possible connections in smaller networks, they will naturally be denser<sup>20</sup>. Nevertheless, the average density of respondents' networks is 0.60, meaning 60% of all possible ties between the significant others they mentioned are present. This means that information can flow quite rapidly, if someone does or knows something, information can be easily passed on through the network. This also means people are constrained, when they do something it is very likely others will know. Information on someone's reputation spreads rapidly through these small worlds, also the neighbourhood in the case of barrio residents. For example when Meribel's (36) mobile phone was stolen last New Year's eve, it was soon recovered from the culprit through some enquiries in the neighbourhood. It was actually only stolen because someone else had been carrying it, had the thief known it was Meribel's he would never even have attempted to steal it. The same counts for Pablo (17), who's network I explore in a little more detail in the next chapter. Pablo had apparently robbed someone on Catia's Boulevard, which quickly came to his mother's ears high up in the barrio, and had her threatening to disown him. Moses (21) also recounted an encounter he had had with malandros in adjoining sector that had questioned his presence and put a rifle to his head, until one of the boys recognised him, and they decided it best to leave him alone.

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<sup>20</sup> As could be expected, the amount of contacts people mentioned and the density of their networks is inversely correlated, though this is only just significant ( $r = -.30$ ,  $p = .04$ ). We cannot really say anything about already tentative class differences here, as barrio dwellers mentioned fewer alters on average, their networks can be expected to be denser regardless of whether this reflects real-life patterns.

Some of the patterns described in this section may be interrelated or related to differences in network size. For example that barrio dwellers tend to have known their contacts for a long time may be partly attributable to having many family members in their networks. Nevertheless, these patterns also reflect qualitative observations of almost diametrically opposed interaction patterns. Social life is much more vibrant on the streets of the barrio than in the centre, where people live their lives in the sanctity of fortified homes and secured shopping centres. Venezuelans are 'callejero' it is often said, they live their lives on the street. This resonates much more with life in the barrio than elsewhere (even if in the barrio certainly not everyone participates). In the evenings and on weekends, groups of men stand chatting around their motorbikes, drinking beer, listening to music. People congregate on the local street corner or basketball court, salsa rhythms echo from countless speaker systems and laughter bounces up and down the alleyways.

People live much closer together both physically and socially, with important consequences for social control, as above examples suggest. Frequent and proximate relationships also make it difficult for barrio dwellers to avoid conflict. Higher class respondents are physically removed from their closest contacts. They enjoy the more separated physical space that Baumgartner (1988) deemed characteristic of American suburbia. Instances of disrespect can be more easily shrugged off and avoided in the separate physical space of the private home.

There is certainly little evidence these respondents have few control mechanisms in their personal networks. Nevertheless, it may well be that more violent people are less constrained by their networks, which I will evaluate in chapter 6. Social disorganisation theories also make assumptions about community-level relationships, not personal relationships. They suggest the absence of trust or cohesion among neighbours and subsequent absence of informal social control on residents, opens communities up to violence. In the next section, I evaluate these assumptions, using qualitative data.

### **5.3.2 Neighbourhood cohesion, informal social control and el malandreo**

*Vivir en barrio hay que saber vivir!*  
*To live in a barrio one has to know how to live!*

Jorge (55)

The previous section showed how barrio residents do have neighbourhood ties, but this does not mean these neighbourhoods are cohesive or are willing to activate these ties to implement informal social control. Where early social disorganisation perspectives often assumed informal

social control from the mere presence of relationships, more recent collective efficacy perspectives suggest the mere presence of ties between neighbours is not; these ties need to be strong; there needs to be community cohesion, trust between neighbours, and a willingness to activate these ties (see Chapter 2). This section explains that community cohesion is not necessarily present in the barrio. However, there is plenty of informal social control over its residents. This section argues that a focus on community cohesion distorts an understanding of informal social control processes in the barrio. Social disorganisation perspectives ignore that violence can be seen as informal social control, particularly where avoidance is difficult and formal social control absent (Black, 1983). This section shows the absence of formal authorities is much more devastating than any absence of community cohesion or willingness to activate ties. In the absence of state provision, el malandreo has claimed some legitimacy over crime control in the barrio.

### 5.3.2.1 Neighbourhood cohesion and informal social control

Table 5-7 below shows the strength of people's relationships in terms of trust and frequency of contact, by relationship category.

**Table 5-7 Strength of ties, according to type of relationship (N=975)**

|                               | Trust (1-5) | Frequency<br>(1= Every day<br>– 4= Hardly<br>ever) |
|-------------------------------|-------------|--|
| <i>N</i>                      | 430         | 434  |
| <b>Family</b>                 | 4.0         | 2.0  |
| <i>N</i>                      | 48          | 48   |
| <b>Partner, children</b>      | 4.7         | 1.1  |
| <i>N</i>                      | 117         | 118  |
| <b>Neighbour</b>              | 3.1         | 1.8  |
| <i>N</i>                      | 134         | 134  |
| <b>Work/ school colleague</b> | 3.6         | 1.8  |
| <i>N</i>                      | 197         | 197  |
| <b>Friend / association</b>   | 3.7         | 2.0  |
| <i>N</i>                      | 42          | 44   |
| <b>Other</b>                  | 2.6         | 2.9  |
| <i>N</i>                      | 968         | 975  |
| <b>Total</b>                  | 3.7         | 1.9  |

It shows that, unsurprisingly, people's family ties are strongest in terms of trust whereas neighbour contacts are slightly stronger in terms of frequency of contact. Average trust in neighbours (3.1) is lower than for other categories. Further, this average figure hides a strong division; nearly a quarter (23%) of the neighbours people mentioned received a score of 1,

indicating people did not trust them at all. Nevertheless, almost a third (33%) of neighbours received a score of 5. People see their neighbours frequently, but do not necessarily trust them as much as their family members. Interestingly, the neighbours that were less trusted were often those more prone to keep an eye on others; they were deemed 'chismoso', gossiping, interfering. Neighbours do indeed apply informal social control on other neighbours' behaviour, whether these neighbourhoods are cohesive or not.

Further, many communities show evidence of a willingness to activate these ties, to get involved in the community. The Consejos Comunales, community councils (see Chapter 3), have arguably revived community participation, at least in some communities (Machado, 2009). Gilberto (68) is a retired agricultural engineer and member of a Consejo Comunal in Catia. His 18 year old son was mistakenly killed in a gang shootout on the street corner four years ago. Nevertheless, his response when I asked him what had changed in the community in the last few years was telling:

Things have changed a bit, actually let's say they have changed a lot, there is a raised awareness of what constitutes public participation in community problems, where before we used to be a little apathetic; we didn't collaborate much in this sense. Today people... at least in 2010, in the floods of 2010, there were terrible rains, people here started helping people in 'La Cueva', helping those above in 'Macayapa', taking them to refuges, they put them here in the local school...

Unstructured interview, male resident, Catia

Of course, this does not mean that everyone participates. Many people do indeed try and avoid the streets, often because of fears of violence. Jorge (55), a retired police officer is well aware of the dangers of the barrio. His son-in-law had been shot and killed, and his mother was hit by a stray bullet the year before. He locks himself in a tight network of close family, neighbours and friends that all know each other. He relies on these neighbours for safety, calling them to check whether any gunshots are going off before making his way home to the barrio. When I asked him whether he had any difficult relationships, or fights with anyone in the barrio he said:

No, if you have a fight, next time you're not looking they kill you from behind, you can't pick a fight with anyone in the barrio, because if you have a little problem with anyone, when you look the other way, they stab you in the back. To live in a barrio, one has to know how to live! Someone that doesn't know how to live in a barrio is dead, do you understand, one that doesn't know how to live in a barrio is dead ... If you're rude, lacking respect in any way, you're dead.

Semi-structured interview, Jorge, Catia

In this view, among frequent contact and lack of avoidance in the dense spaces of the barrio, violence itself becomes a form of informal social control. The relational structures of the barrio, rather than an ability to work together for the common good, open the barrio up to violence (or

the threat of violence) as informal social control. Jorge says it well – there is certainly no lack of informal social control over residents in the barrio, people that are disrespectful of others will be reprimanded, if necessary with violence.

The contrast with the centre is telling here, and indicative of how a focus on community cohesion stigmatises poor communities by telling them they need to work together to solve their problems. In the centre hardly anyone takes responsibility for community problems. The people living there also do not need to take responsibility or activate ties beyond paying their municipal taxes. Rubbish is collected, common spaces are maintained. Police patrols are frequent, and even then, there is money to pay for private security. Private security that usually consists of paying poorer, barrio, residents minimum wages to watch the properties of the rich.

Eduardo (44) is one of these private security guards in the centre, his case illustrates the ambiguities of informal social control. When his 14-year-old son was shot and paralysed, he was not allowed to take time off from his job as a night-watchman. He shuttled between hospital and work. His son had been implicated in a deadly shooting, and they could no longer return to their barrio; the whole family (mother, father and daughter) and two police officers instructed with watching the boy stayed on the same hospital floor for weeks. It was exactly the implementation of informal social control, the knowledge that the extended family of the man his son had allegedly killed would be seeking revenge, which put him in this situation.

In putting the onus for informal social control on the community itself social disorganisation perspectives take away from a much more urgent problem.

### **5.3.2.2 The absence of formal authorities**

What is intrinsically striking about the barrio is the absence of authoritative third parties for conflict resolution. We have already seen barrio residents cannot easily avoid conflicts in the dense relationship structures of the barrio. The vibrant social life might often cause conflict, but nobody has more authority than anyone else to deal with it. Everyone is equal and entitled to have their rights respected. Nobody has a more legitimate say over anybody else. In absence of state (see also 3.3.2.4), community problems are reduced to exactly that, community problems. The community is responsible for addressing them, but it is often unclear whom represents the community more legitimately than another.



Even the recently established Consejos Comunales cannot necessarily claim to represent the community. They receive funds directly from central government in a continuation of clientelist politics (see Chapter 3). The community itself does not necessarily need to be involved in a transaction that is ultimately between the government and these representatives of the community. Representatives are elected and projects voted at community meetings, but certainly not all residents attend these meetings<sup>21</sup>. As everyone is equal, those that have taken it upon themselves to take responsibility for the community, are often distrusted, mocked or accused of doing it for self-gain. Gilberto was still engaged in the Consejo Comunal, but he was tired of accusations and rumours that spread like fire in the small worlds of the barrio.

People are like... What one person says is repeated by others and those others say it's true, that kind of gets to me (...) you know that 'the Consejos Comunales steal money, that they are making a profit from the apartments, that we're helping our friends, that some have put their children in residences meant for flood victims...'

Unstructured interview, male resident, Catia

Individuals do come together, whether in the Consejo Comunal, Church, or on the streets, there is ultimately no consensus over whom has more authority over anybody else. Putting the burden on individuals and groups rather than truly authoritative institutions has many unwanted, and potentially violent, side-effects. Victor (38) took me by surprise when he said levels of violence in his sector were 'maintained':

**You mean it has stayed the same?**

No no, we maintain it (...) people that come here with eh (...) that start robbing and stuff, we stop them.

**Ah ok, how do you do this? You have a neighbourhood watch?**

No. We do it ourselves, people that come and are involved in this type of thing, we catch them ourselves. 'If you do this, you're going to do it outside, here you can't get into this. If you start robbing here, you'll (...) you'll get what's coming'

Semi-structured interview, Victor, Catia

Even police officers implement informal social control over and above the law and order they are meant to represent, as evidenced by Hector (26). Hector is an interesting case study because his twin brother is a malandro in the barrio, whereas he joined the police force (I will touch upon this apparent contradiction in Chapter 7). He vividly recounted an altercation he had had a few months before, where he had engaged in a fierce exchange of bullets with a local boy who endangered his sector and family by hanging around their street, attracting his 'culebras', vendettas or 'problems'. Did you report this incident, arrest him or something, I asked? He looked at me, kind of taken aback, exposed;

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<sup>21</sup> Only 4 people that completed the semi-structured interviews (8%) participated in meetings of their local Consejo Comunal.

Why would I? This was a personal thing.

Going on to explain the particular conundrum of police in Venezuela's barrios, where everyone knows everybody else, and malandros have effectively taken over some of the state's contested monopoly on violence and crime control;

I didn't report it because he no longer posed a threat, I knew the leader of his gang and resolved the issue. In this barrio I know everyone, well not everyone, but... there's contact, you know, 'what's up, brother?'... (...) In the barrio there is no social security. In the barrio, delinquents, the underworld rule. Nobody reports them and they reap the benefits. The policeman that enters there has his hands tied, you know... There is no support, you're not in your own barrio, you don't have the necessary security (...)

Semi-structured interview, Hector, Catia

### 5.3.2.3 El malandreo as informal social control

Malandros play an ambiguous role in community safety. They endanger the community by attracting problems, but are often tolerated because they also paradoxically protect the community from unknown malandros in other sectors. Where frequent contact provides informal social control over residents, including malandros, residents have no control over people coming from different neighbourhoods. Malandros may be the lesser evil than having a community whose gates are open to roaming malandros from outside. They do a better job than the police in protecting these neighbourhoods from outside interference, even if they endanger the community simultaneously. One elderly lady illustrates this tenuous relationship perfectly:

Where I live for instance there is a lot of insecurity... Insecurity is ubiquitous, but where I live we have the weakness of a drug parlour that causes us a lot of trouble, nevertheless within this weakness lies its strength too, because these same people do not allow that others come and cause trouble for the people that live there.

Group interview, female resident, Catia

Carlos, abovementioned prisoner in Cumaná, looks back on his glory days with melancholy and illustrates this symbiotic relationship with the barrio, where both the barrio and malandros profit from the dense ties that link them together<sup>22</sup>.

I helped the people (...) when people asked me to throw a party I did; a big party, every December, a party in the whole barrio, I liked it (...)

#### **You shared with everyone?**

Of course, drinks, food, if someone didn't have enough, didn't have enough food, I gave it to them. Because it compensates me, because they're aware that, you know... when I need a favour of one of them, they won't tell. You have to reach out, and when the

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<sup>22</sup> These findings are more in line with the negotiated coexistence model, where strong community ties are seen to support violent offenders (see Chapter 2). Nevertheless, I do not use this term because in explaining this coexistence solely by dense, interdependent ties in the neighbourhood, this perspective also ignores the absence of formal social control.

police come looking for you, they also reach out 'here they come' and you have time to get to safety. That's how it is. You have to be on a good footing with the people, like a good governor something like that.

Semi-structured interview, Carlos, Cumaná

Barrio residents will not turn in local malandros, not necessarily because they are on a 'good footing' with them, but because the alternative may be worse. Informal social control is feared more than formal social control. Gabriel (24), who had been shot in the back as he was celebrating Chávez' election victory on the streets of a neighbouring barrio, when I asked him why he did not report it to the police, responds:

Because the justice system in Venezuela doesn't function, say I report it, the police catches him, they take his gun and 10,000 Bolivars and they tell him so and so was the one who reported you. And then they let him go, so in the end [reporting] is worse...

Semi-structured interview, Gabriel, Catia

Reiterating the absence of formal control mechanisms as an important factor in the tenuous balance between informal social control systems in the barrio. In the barrio nobody imposes hierarchy or has more authority than another – malandros are still malandros, police are 'uniformed malandros' and the community councils are 'thieves'. There is no consensus over whom has more rights than another to implement their rules. Malandros are not trusted, but they are local and will not hurt the community. Chapter 7 will show their code explicitly condemns robbing or killing in the neighbourhood. As Victor suggests in his quote above, this is also closely watched over by the community.

### 5.3.3 Informal social control – Summary

In all, there is little evidence people's personal networks or neighbourhoods lack informal social control. In the absence of formal social control, life in the barrio can feel more regimented than the centre. There is an inherent tension between the freedoms, on the one hand, and many physical and material insecurities, on the other, generated by the lack of formal institutions<sup>23</sup>. Informal social control mechanisms take over and people that break informal rules of engagement are indeed reprimanded, with words, social isolation, or even violence. Because these rules are informal and inherently flexible it is difficult to anticipate the consequences of one's actions. Generally, if one avoids confrontation and 'does not interfere with another's business', it is commonly accepted that one should be able to avoid violence. Nevertheless, the dense spaces of the barrio make avoidance difficult to start with. Where Baumgartner (1988)

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<sup>23</sup> That formal institutions are lacking also does not mean other institutions are undermined; the family, the church, and el malandreo are strong, informal institutions invoking rules and social order.

describes social control in the American suburb as moral minimalism, the barrio could be described as a place of moral ubiquity, social control is frequent and ubiquitous, yet informal and ambiguous.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter looked at conditions of life in the barrio, focussing particularly on those aspects of barrio residents' lives that are often seen to be conducive to higher levels of violence; their real and perceived opportunities and their informal social control mechanisms. It made use of personal networks as concrete indicators of people's opportunities, expectations and informal social controls to better appreciate some assumptions of macro-level theories. Traditional macro-level research uses abstract boundaries that do not necessarily reflect people's real or perceived opportunities, nor their informal social control mechanisms.

This chapter has shown that these perspectives are particularly limited in understanding the role of people's relationships in the production of informal social control. Social disorganisation perspectives make assumptions about the effects of community-level relationships on cohesion and informal social control, without questioning these relationships in detail. I do not suggest community cohesion is not important in the production of neighbourhood homicide rates, although it might be difficult to distinguish cause from effect, as violence might also limit community cohesion and participation. The main point is that a focus on cohesion ignores informal social control processes in the barrio. Whether or not these spaces are cohesive does not mean there are no informal social control mechanisms, rules or institutions that govern behaviour in the barrio, and thus that violent people are free to exploit these opportunities. A more nuanced appraisal of these relationships offers important insights and suggest future research should focus on these relationships, rather than their effects. Further, by focussing on how relationships within abstract boundaries might provide informal social control, these perspectives ignore the more detrimental absence of formal social control. More relational research approaches stress the construction of violent identities and the role of violence as social control, where formal social control is absent. This chapter supports these relational perspectives, showing that the barrio has plenty of informal social control, regardless of its internal cohesion.

This chapter also showed that in many ways barrio residents' conditions are defined by informality and uncertainty. Many respondents have no permanent residence. They have little

access to formal job opportunities in their networks, particularly in the private sector. There is also evidence of strain, a gap between people's opportunities and their expectations, whether given by a general standard, or by their interaction groups, although there is substantial variation in these measures. Further, a historical lack of formal social control opens the barrio up to much more ambiguous forms of informal social control. It is relatively easy to see the attractions of violent identities under these conditions. El malandreo fills the vacuums<sup>24</sup> left by the state, simultaneously providing material wealth, masculine status and (paradoxically) social control and physical security. Where we can see the continued attractions of violent identities, we cannot link these observations to differential homicide rates as the data I collected are indicative rather than representative for any particular barrio. In the next chapter I will look at the effects of inequality at the micro-level, evaluating whether more violent individuals are perhaps more affected by strain or have less informal social controls embedded in their networks.

In conclusion, a focus on networks also showed how inequalities continue to reproduce themselves. It showed that barrio dwellers in this sample have strong, homophilous ties that are good for social support and social control but not for access to different ideas and opportunities. Private jobs appear to remain predominantly in the hands of people living in the centre, even if political powers were recently reshuffled. Social change is slow, and material inequalities continuously reproduce themselves through a continued lack of vertical ties between the barrio and the centre.

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<sup>24</sup> See section 3.3.2.4

## **CHAPTER 6      VIOLENT PEOPLE? AN EXPLORATION OF CONNECTIONS BETWEEN INEQUALITY AND VIOLENCE AT THE MICRO-LEVEL**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores some connections between inequality and violence at the micro-level, by looking at how the interactions and relationships embedded in people's personal networks might relate to their involvement in violence. Chapter 2 showed that many theories make assumptions about how people's relationships mediate or mitigate connections between inequality and violence, but empirical work that explicitly explores these relationships is relatively rare, particularly in Venezuela. Where chapter 5 focussed on how people's relationships shape life in the barrio more generally, this chapter focuses more closely on individuals, their relationships and their use of violence. It specifically explores the core assumptions of three theoretical frameworks; relative deprivation, social control and self-help theories through evaluating whether and how people's interactions and relationships may generate motivations for violence, can keep them from violence through exerting social control or how the pattern of relationships itself may generate the conditions for violence.

Chapter 2 showed that most academic work on violence continues to subscribe to rational-actor perspectives on violent offenders whom lack the means or controls to live a non-violent life. These theories make assumptions about how inequality affects people, and how their relationships may mitigate and mediate the effects of inequality. Chapter 2 presented a detailed overview of these assumptions, I repeat them here very briefly. Strain perspectives assume people may be motivated to use violence when there is a gap between their expectations and their opportunities to achieve these. Relative deprivation perspectives suggest strain follows from negative comparison to a reference group, and thus that people's relationships may mediate the effect of inequality on violence by generating strain. Social control perspectives expect a mitigating effect from strong, dense relationships that can keep people from violence. Self-help perspectives expect the opposite, that strong, dense ties may lead to more violence as informal social control. Chapter 3 evaluated aggregate statistics on inequality and violence and concluded that these tell us very little about these theoretical assumptions. A decline in aggregate income inequality does not necessarily imply people are less motivated or more constrained to use violence. Chapter 4 outlined the methodological tools and strategies used to collect more appropriate data. Chapter 5, the first empirical chapter, then looked at inequality through the lens of people's personal networks. It showed that people living in the barrio still

tend to have little access to formal opportunities in their networks and many experience considerable strain, but found little evidence the barrio lacks informal social control.

This chapter relates these findings to violence by exploring whether people that have used more violence than others differ from these others in terms of their relationships, using the network data collected for forty-five people in Venezuela and relating them to some measures that reflect their use of violence. It finds few differences between people that had used more violence than others and concludes that these people's interactions and relationships do not necessarily generate motivations for violence, nor do they reflect a lack of adequate social controls, as much as they generate violence. People may feel relatively deprived, they are watched over and actively discouraged from violence, but the weight of previous and/or future violence can exert the more pressing influence on their behaviour. In lack of avoidance or third party settlement in the dense spaces of the barrio, violence itself can thus be seen as a way to exert control over others' behaviours. Nevertheless, these findings may be influenced by the particular type of violence explored here, which is biased towards gun and malandro behaviours. This type of violence may indeed follow a distinct dynamic, as I will explore in more detail in Chapter 7.

In all, and throughout this chapter I argue that the mechanisms by which inequality is said to affect people's relationships and lead to violence in traditional frameworks do not materialise so clearly at the micro-level, at least with these measures and among this sample. This chapter suggests that rather than looking for individual differences, evaluating the relationships in which violence occurs is a more adequate line of enquiry that does not stigmatise all of the poor, but problematizes the interactions and relationships that sustain poverty and inequality. In what follows I first examine some of the recurring problems when measuring violence and some characteristics of the measures used here. The next section looks at some demographic differences. The following sections explore the mitigating and mediating effects of people's relationships; strain/relative deprivation, control and self-help, respectively. Findings are summarised in a conclusion.

## **6.2 The many shades of violence**

This chapter draws predominantly on data collected from the forty-five people that completed the semi-structured questionnaire. Chapter 4 described the sample and data collection in detail, here I summarise some key characteristics. As I was particularly interested in people that had

been involved in violence, I looked for respondents on the streets of the barrio, but also in public hospitals and prison. Because of this sampling strategy, the sample is biased towards young, barrio men that have indeed engaged in violence and thus well-suited to explore some assumptions about violence. The average age of respondents in this sample is 30, ranging from 15 to 55. The majority (31 of 45) of respondents are male, and just over half (24 of 45), have not finished secondary education. The bulk of these people work in insecure sectors, 33 have no regular wages coming, of which 13 are informally employed. Almost all (42 of 45) respondents are barrio dwellers, three live in higher-class areas.

The questionnaire contained standardised as well as open-ended questions on inequality, personal networks and violence. The standardised data provide some comparative measures that allow me to typify and compare these forty-five respondents, whereas the open-ended data allow me to explore these standards in much richer detail. Whereas other chapters also draw explicitly on qualitative data gathered through observations and unstructured interviews, these data remain mostly implicit in this chapter. Nevertheless, they still strongly guided my interpretations, it was through the triangulation of the semi-structured interviews with data from the unstructured interviews and observations that my thoughts garnered a structure I feel adequately reflects the realities of the barrio I encountered. This chapter thus mostly presents data from the semi-structured interviews, that are nevertheless corroborated by the other types of data that were collected during fieldwork. Most of the data used in this chapter have been described extensively in Chapter 5, I restrict myself here to a description of the data on violence, that have not previously been discussed.

Chapters 2 and 4 outlined some of the main difficulties in gathering data on violence. The key initial problem is that it is almost impossible to systematically observe acts of violence. As such research traditionally depends on secondary police data, or post-fact accounts and reports of violence by the people involved in it. Even in Venezuela, classified as the second most violent country in the world based on its homicide rate (UNODC, 2014), violence is still a relatively rare occurrence in everyday life and very difficult to observe directly. As detailed in Chapter 4, one of my main research strategies was thus to look for respondents in hospitals and prisons, where there was a higher likelihood of engaging with people that had been directly involved in violence. While this research strategy was effective in gaining access to people involved in violence it also led to a relatively diverse sample, just under half (22 of 45) of which were interviewed because they were involved in violence. It was my original intention to compare the networks of this sample to a control sample of people that I approached on the streets of the barrio. However,



these respondents could not easily be categorised into neatly defined groups. Even severe acts of violence seldom fall clearly on either side of *malandro*/'sano'<sup>1</sup> or even victim/perpetrator<sup>2</sup> divides. The boundaries are grey. Jorge, for instance, an ex-police officer described in Chapter 5, had set up a food stall after his police regiment, the Caracas Metropolitan Police, was disbanded by Chávez<sup>3</sup>. Because I interviewed him on the streets, he was part of the not involved control sample, but in discussions with him he noted that he had killed at least 5 people while on active duty for the police. Here it was difficult not to draw a parallel between the acts of violence he had perpetrated with those of gang members whom also perceive themselves to be doing their duty, within their own lived hierarchy and set of rules, as Chapter 7 will explore in more detail. Apart from this categorical classification, I asked respondents a number of different questions that allow for comparing and contrasting their involvement in, and attitudes towards, violence. I included some open-ended and self-report questions on physical violence, but also some statements on anger and impulsivity and beliefs in the legitimacy of violence. The open-ended questions enquired in detail about any violent interactions these people had been involved in and allow me to add some important insights to this chapter. The other questions allow me to calculate more standardised measures by which I can compare these individuals, I discuss them sequentially below.

I asked respondents for self-reported frequencies<sup>4</sup> of involvement in six different acts of violence. I used wording and items from the Reactive-Proactive Aggression Questionnaire (RPQ) (Raine et al., 2006) to evaluate the frequency (1, never, to 4, often)<sup>5</sup> of respondents'

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<sup>1</sup> Literally 'healthy', word used colloquially to refer to people who do not get involved in *malandro* practices.

<sup>2</sup> The correlation between a composite measure of victimisation and the composite measure of violence is quite strong ( $r=.65$   $p=.00$ ) but I do not have space to address it here.

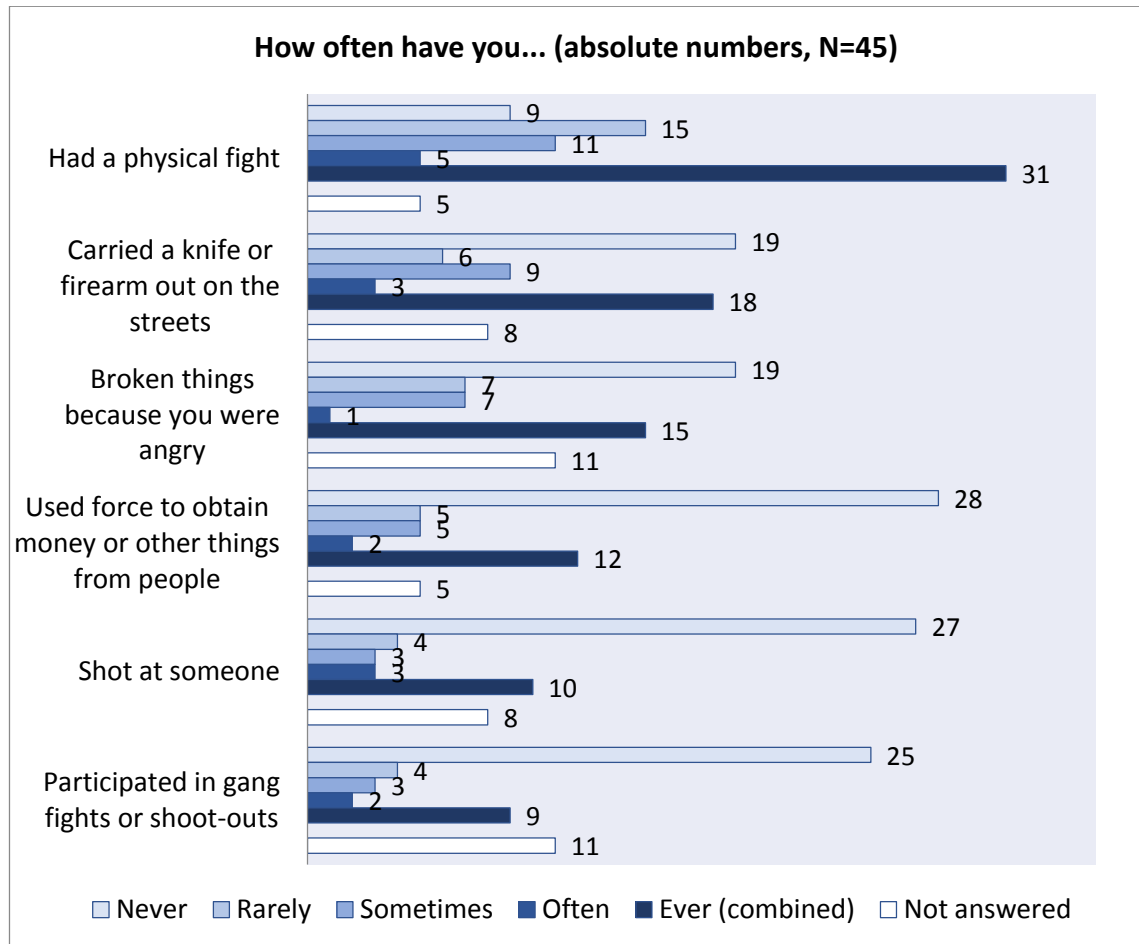
<sup>3</sup> The regiment was disbanded because of several corruption scandals and a reputation for violence.

<sup>4</sup> Asking for frequency of involvement without stipulating a timeline gives me more variation to work with. For instance, in a self-report study of Venezuelan students, only 7% of adolescents reported having participated in fights in the last 12 months, which was the highest 12-month frequency of all included behaviours (Birkbeck et al., 2010). Given I already have a small sample, asking for recent involvement would have severely limited my potential to say anything about violence. Asking for frequency implicitly controls for recall bias, as people who had not recently been involved can indicate lower frequencies. Antonio (45), for instance, an ex-*malandro* who had overtly renounced his past life, had engaged in all of these behaviours, but he responded 'rarely' or 'sometimes' to most as it had been a long time since he had. This is still reflected in a relatively high CVI score of 2.8. Pablo (17) is a current *malandro* whom responded 'often' to most items, reflected in the highest CVI score of the sample at 3.6. Nevertheless, this approach makes it more difficult to relate these instances of violence to people's more concurrent perceptions and relationships.

<sup>5</sup> I adjusted this scale from a 3 point to a 5 point scale. As nobody used the category 5, all the time, apart from for the carrying of weapons, I merged 4 and 5 into 'often'.

involvement in these acts of aggression<sup>6</sup>. Figure 6-1 shows respondents' responses to how frequently they had 'had a physical fight', 'carried a knife or firearm out on the streets', 'broken things because they were angry', 'used force to obtain money or things from others', 'deliberately shot at someone', or 'participated in gang fights or shoot-outs'.

**Figure 6-1 Self-reported frequency of involvement in violence (N=45)**



Only eight people had never engaged in any of these acts of violence, most (5) of them women. It might not be surprising the majority (31 or 78% of people asked) have had a physical fight (kicked, hit, or pushed someone) at some point in their lives, for quite a few these fights remained limited to physical playground quarrels. We may thus find this level of violence in other settings. Nevertheless, other frequencies are high too; eighteen people had carried a knife or firearm, fifteen people had broken things because they were angry, twelve people had robbed, and nine had participated in gang fights or shoot-outs. Chillingly, ten people, over one in four, admitted to having deliberately shot at someone. Most of these behaviours are also typical of

<sup>6</sup> I also adjusted the wording of the original RPQ items for the Venezuelan context. Exact Spanish wording can be found in the questionnaire in Appendix 2.

malandros and 'mala conductas', badly behaved people, a less defamatory description used for people that are not necessarily as embroiled in illegal activities as malandros. As my sample includes four prisoners, three malandros, four mala conductas and three ex-malandros, these frequencies are not necessarily high.

I calculated a Composite Violence Indicator (CVI) by summing respondents' frequency scores on these items and dividing it by the number of answers to account for missing values<sup>7</sup>. These items do not necessarily tap the same types of aggression, although they are all highly correlated<sup>8</sup>. Further, theoretical perspectives do not often make distinctions between different types of violence, or even crime in general. The same individual risk factors are often presumed to lead to behaviours as diverse as homicidal violence, property crime and even involvement in gangs. The items included here are all measures of aggression, but the people that have highest scores on it are malandros and ex-malandros (see below). Because many items (e.g. gang fights, robbery) are associated with malandro lifestyles, this measure is undoubtedly distorted towards gun<sup>9</sup> violence by malandros. This is also the type of violence that is of most concern to Venezuelans and is indeed very much the interest of this thesis. However, this type of violence may follow a different dynamic than the types of aggression and violence other studies explore. The patterns explored below seem to contradict many previous studies and do indeed lead me to evaluate the particular dynamics of gun violence used by malandros in Chapter 7.

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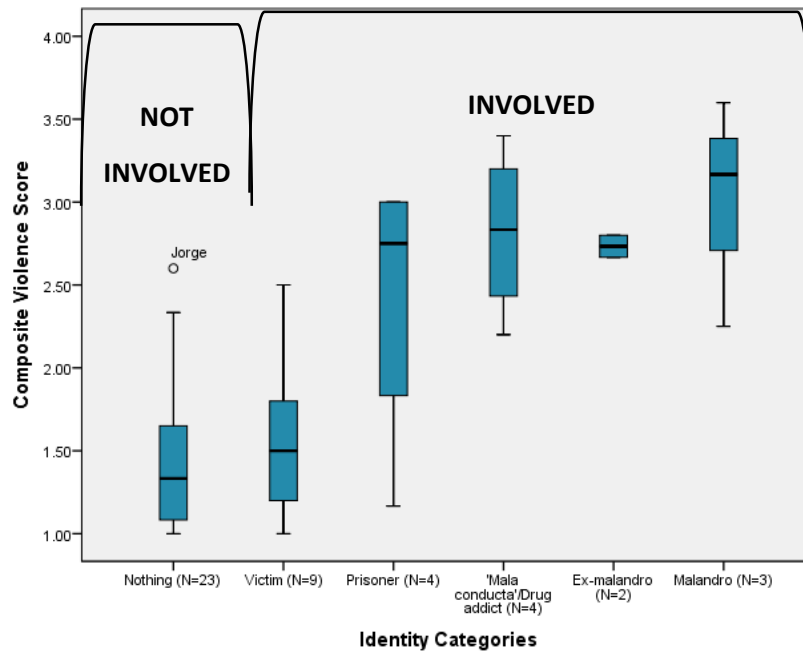
<sup>7</sup> The missing answers are quite high on all these items. Nevertheless, there is no reason to believe people declined to answer because they had been involved in these acts, thus biasing the measure. As the questionnaire focussed on personal networks and I originally set out to compare networks of people involved in violence versus people that had not been involved, I was negligent in ensuring everyone answered all items. For instance, when people said they had not carried a gun, I often assumed they had not shot at someone and declined to follow up with this question. Because many interviews were conducted on the streets and in hospitals, some responses were also unclear as I was transcribing these interviews. It was at the analysis stage that the greyness of the boundaries of violence became increasingly obvious, nevertheless the insight that these self-report measures would allow me to make better distinctions came too late.

<sup>8</sup> Cronbach's alpha for this scale is .865, indicating high reliability. Only 'I have broken things because I was angry' does not correlate significantly to carrying weapons or having shot at someone. This measure ranges from 1 (where people had never participated in any) to 3.6, with an average score of 1.8 and a standard deviation of 0.8. It is skewed towards the left, with a median of 1.5 and 14 people scoring 1.2 or below.

<sup>9</sup> The ubiquity of gun use in this sample is corroborated by the fact that, even though this is a notoriously underreported question, twelve people admitted to owning a gun. Some others did not own a gun at the time, but could easily borrow or rent one from acquaintances. Disturbingly, more people confided they had a gun than owned a car or motorbike (11 respondents). Four of the people that completed the instrument admitted to having killed (an)other(s), all with guns.

Figure 6-2 shows the dispersion of the CVI according to the original categorical distinction between people that had been interviewed on the streets, and thus not because they had been involved in violence (n=23), and those that were interviewed because of their involvement in violence (n=22), making further distinctions in this latter category according to type of involvement.

**Figure 6-2 Dispersion of Composite Violence Indicator (CVI) within and between violent identity categories (N=45)**



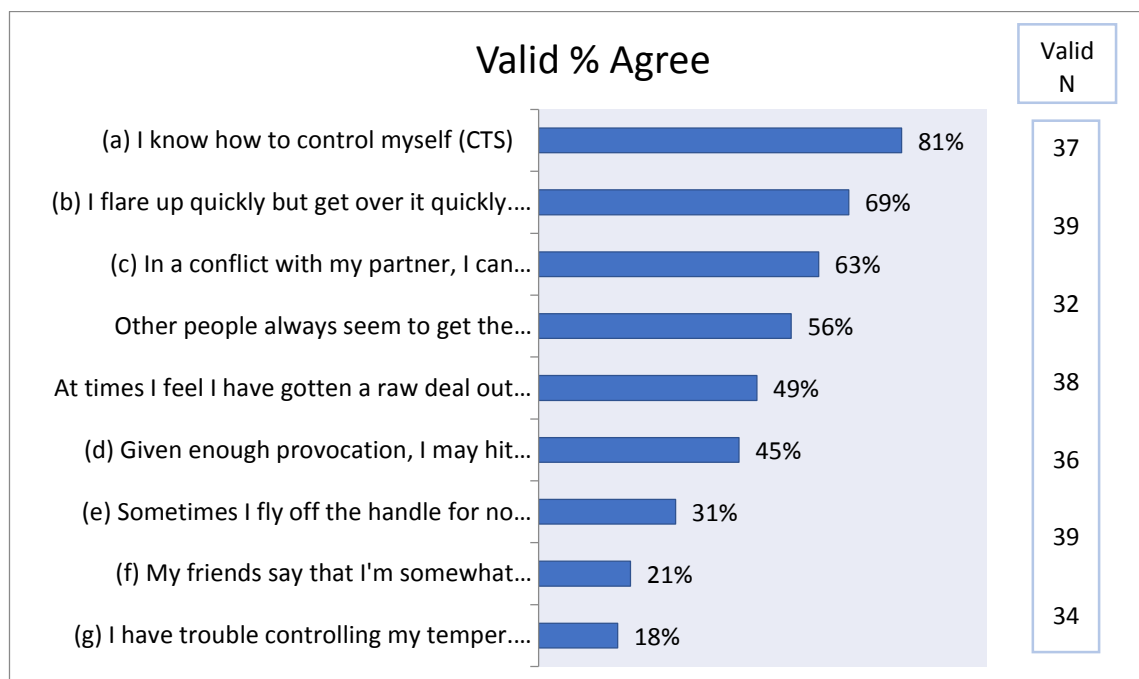
This original categorisation does indeed reflect important differences, on average. Those involved in violence have a significantly higher average CVI of 2.2 compared to 1.4<sup>10</sup> for those uninvolved. Nevertheless, the additional distinction I make in latter category shows it still hides many differences. Many of the people I interviewed in hospital (n=9) had been purely victims, at the wrong place at the wrong time. Carla (15) for instance had just been sitting on her porch with her sisters when a stray bullet, fired in celebration of Chávez' election victory, hit her in the neck. The category 'mala conductas' (n=4) is a commonly used term to refer to people that are on a deviant path, but are not necessarily tied up in el malandreo. In this sample, it refers to people that do not identify as malandros but were problematic drug users and often involved in robberies and petty theft to maintain their habits. All four people in this category, Javier (20), Arturo (24), Gabriel (24), and Ale (25) have a relatively high CVI, 2.8 on average. Three of four prisoners also have high CVI scores. Juan (45) had murdered a boy in his barrio and frequently engaged in fights, Carlos (35) had been a malandro and was accused of murder, and Simon (31)

<sup>10</sup> ANOVA (F=16.7, p=.00)

had attempted to kill someone. The fourth prisoner was Nadia (18), a pregnant girl who had been arrested as she had been travelling in a car where a large quantity of cocaine was discovered. She mentioned she had once been involved in a fight, but her CVI (1.2) reflects she had not been involved in many other incidents. It was also difficult to place ex-malandros, categorically speaking they would belong on the not involved side as they no longer explicitly engaged in violence. Nevertheless, both had been recently affected by violence (Antonio's nephew and Mateo's cousin had been killed recently) and both indicated they might seek revenge. Because of their past involvement in violence, they also have high CVI scores. Self-identified malandros, Pablo (17), Jaime (18) and Manuel (26) have the highest average CVI of 3 in this sample. In all, the CVI is a better reflection of people's involvement in violence than a categorical distinction. This is also the case for abovementioned Jorge, an outlier with a CVI of 2.6 on the not involved side. Using the CVI as an indication thereof we can account much better for his past involvement in violence.

I also asked respondents to indicate how well a number of items from the Buss-Perry (1992) Aggression (BPA) questionnaire and the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS-2)<sup>11</sup> (Straus et al., 1996) described them (1, not at all, to 5, very much). They tap hostility, anger and impulsivity more than physical violence. Figure 6-3 shows respondents' agreement to these statements.

**Figure 6-3 Conflict Tactics (CTS - ACTIVA) and Buss-Perry Aggression (BPA) scales**

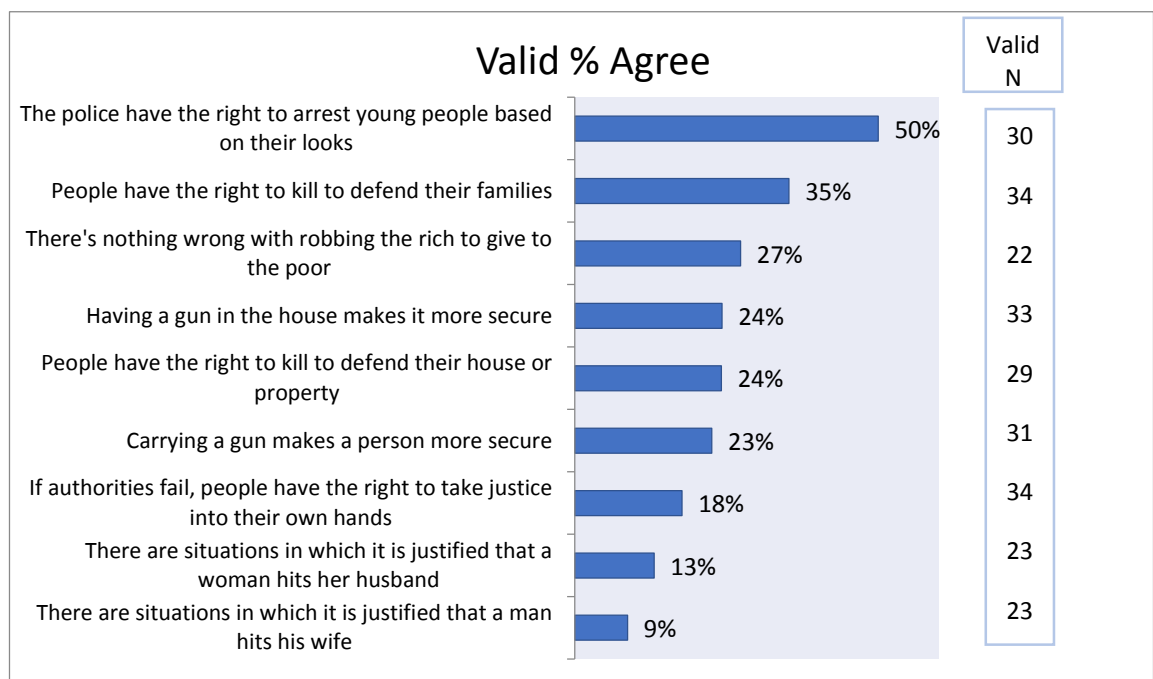


<sup>11</sup> I used the Latin American adaptations of these questionnaires from the cross-national ACTIVA study (Fournier et al., 1999).

In stark contrast to the prevalence of physical violence in this sample, most respondents (30 or 81% of respondents asked) felt they could control themselves, and just 6 (18% of those asked) said they had trouble controlling their temper. Nevertheless, a substantial number say that they may hit another person, given enough provocation (17, or 45% of those asked) or that they sometimes fly off the handle for no good reason (11 or 31% of those asked). I also computed a composite measure of these items by summing respondents' scores on these items and dividing it by the number of answers to account for missing values<sup>12</sup>. Surprisingly, this composite measure does not correlate well with the CVI<sup>13</sup>, indicating that people that score higher on the types of gun and gang violence measured by the CVI do not necessarily feel 'angry', 'impulsive', or are unable to resolve conflicts in appropriate manners, and suggesting these measures reflect different types of violence, an issue which I return to in section 6.4.2 below.

I also included some scales that measure attitudes towards the legitimacy of the law and violence that were used in a cross-national study of violence and conflict resolution mechanisms in Latin America and Spain (Fournier et al., 1999). Figure 6-4 shows respondents' agreement to these items.

**Figure 6-4 Attitudes towards the legitimacy of violence**



<sup>12</sup> After rescaling items d, e, f and g so 1 reflected less and 5 more control. Cronbach's alpha for reliability was .760, indicating relatively high consistency between these items.

<sup>13</sup> ( $r = -.28$ ,  $p = .07$ )

A substantial number of respondents hold quite cynical attitudes towards the law and feel violence is justified on many occasions. Over a third of respondents asked (35%) felt people have the right to kill to defend their families, and just under a fifth (18%) feel people have the right to take justice in their own hands, if authorities fail. Around a quarter also feel having and carrying guns makes them more secure (24% and 23% respectively). Just as I did with the other scales, I computed a composite measure of these statements<sup>14</sup> that shows the strongest correlation with the CVI ( $r=.68$ ,  $p=.00$ ). This suggests the people that had used more physical violence than others do indeed feel violence is justified. I will explore this correlation in more detail in 6.4.3. below.

In what follows, I often focus on the types of violence measured by the CVI, using this indicator as well as descriptive accounts of specific instances of violence, as this is the type of violence of interest in this thesis. Nevertheless, where relevant I add additional contrast with these other measures of self-control and beliefs towards the legitimacy of violence. In all, while the sample is small and biased and the measures imperfect, these data are useful for exploring some connections between inequality and violence at the micro-level. Some people have indeed been involved in much more violence than others, we can now explore whether and how they might differ from these others.

### **6.3 The demographics of violence**

In this section, I briefly explore some age, gender, and class differences, before turning to how the relationships in people's networks might be related to their use of violence in the next sections.

Perhaps surprisingly, respondents' age does not correlate well with the indicators of violence discussed above. Other studies and official statistics often find young people are more frequently involved in violence than older people (Orpinas, 1999; Smith, 2007). Official statistics in Venezuela also reflect important age differences in violent victimisation (see Chapter 3), but official estimates of violent offenders are not available. The lack of correlations in this sample is doubtlessly influenced by the fact I specifically looked for people involved violence. The few older people in the sample, particularly the men, were often approached because they had been involved in violence. Victor (38) and Juan (45) had both been recently involved in violence.

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<sup>14</sup> Cronbach's Alpha = .838.

Further, the use of a lifetime frequency rather than a recent prevalence measure of physical violence influences some older respondents' scores, as is the case for Antonio (45) and Jorge (55), whose relatively high CVI scores reflect behaviours that had occurred a while back. Younger men like Pablo (17), Javier (20) and Manuel (26) do have higher scores, but this is balanced out by the fact many other young men, and women in particular, have low CVI scores. It is fair to say that most recent incidents of severe violence are indeed concentrated among young males.

Table 6-1 shows the composite indicators of physical violence, self-control and beliefs in the legitimacy of violence according to gender.

**Table 6-1 Average scores on indicators of violence, according to gender<sup>15</sup>**

|   | <b>Male</b> | <b>Female</b> |
|---|-------------|---------------|
| <i>N</i>                                | <i>31</i>   | <i>14</i>     |
| <b>CVI**</b>                            | 2.1         | 1.3           |
| <b>Self-control</b>                     | 3.9         | 3.8           |
| <b>Belief in legitimacy of violence</b> | 2.4         | 1.9           |

We observe little gender difference in the composite measure of self-control, a small but insignificant difference in beliefs in the legitimacy of violence, but a significant difference in the type of violence measured by the CVI. This difference, with average composite violence scores of 2.1 for men and 1.3 for women is one of the most pertinent findings in this sample. It reflects recurrent, but comparatively little investigated, findings in violent offending between men and women in many different contexts (Heidensohn and Gelsthorpe, 2007). These differences are indeed accounted for in traditional frameworks, strain theories suggest women are less driven by material goals, and respond differently to strain. Control perspectives suggest women experience more constraint from their environments. We will evaluate these assumptions in more detail below. It should be noted here, however, that these gender differences may be due to the particular behaviours included in the CVI. Apart from abovementioned Carla (15), I never encountered any women victimised by bullets in a hospital bed. Nadia (18) was in prison, but she was kept separately from the wards controlled by malandros and did not appear to have engaged in much deviant behaviours. Like Carla, she may just have been at the wrong place at the wrong time, travelling in a car that was transporting cocaine. Although malandros often talked of female counterparts, I never came across any. Almost all women were approached on

<sup>15</sup> All gender differences were tested for significance using ANOVA, only the difference in the CVI was significant ( $F=14.4$ ,  $p=.00$ ).



the streets. Some of these women have indeed engaged in violence, but none of them were engaged in the type of lifestyle centred on guns and violence associated with *malandros*. As the CVI is biased towards this type of violence, this may partly account for these differences. Interestingly, Table 6-1 also shows that there is little difference<sup>16</sup> between men and women in terms of the more angry, impulsive behaviours that are measured by the composite measure of self-control, further suggesting these measures may indeed reflect different types of violence.

Table 6-2 shows indicators of violence according to class.

**Table 6-2 Average scores on indicators of violence, according to class<sup>17</sup>**

|   | <b>Barrio</b> | <b>Centre</b> |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| <i>N</i>                                | 42            | 3             |
| <b>CVI</b>                              | 1.9           | 1.5           |
| <b>Self-control</b>                     | 3.9           | 3.6           |
| <b>Belief in legitimacy of violence</b> | 2.3           | 2.0           |

Barrio residents have slightly higher scores on all of these indicators, but none of these differences are significant. The three higher-class respondents have lower CVI scores of 1.5 on average, compared to 1.9 for barrio dwellers. This small and insignificant difference may be surprising given the vast majority of homicides occurs in the barrio (see Chapter 3). Nevertheless, it reflects that certainly not all barrio residents, even in this sample, have been involved in the violence measured by the CVI. Further, given the very small subsample of higher-class respondents, it is influenced disproportionately by Naklon (32), a higher-class taxi driver with a relatively high score of 2.2. Two other higher-class respondents, David (35) and Natalia (21) had low CVI scores of 1 and 1.2 respectively. Naklon grew up in the upper-class hills around Caracas and moves in these circles, his network includes some of Venezuela's most famous musicians. Nevertheless, he had been imprisoned for spouse abuse and told me of an adolescence of frequent fights, drugs and robberies; he even proudly referred to himself as a '*malandro rico*', a rich *malandro*, even if he had never engaged in deadly violence. Violence certainly is not limited to the bottom classes, although all instances of deadly violence are indeed reported by barrio dwellers.

<sup>16</sup> In fact, although this is of course entirely indicative given the sample size, the slightly higher score for men indicates the men in this sample feel they can control themselves slightly better than the women in this sample.

<sup>17</sup> All class differences were tested for significance using ANOVA, none were significant.

In sum, as previous research in different countries has repeatedly established, the more physically violent people in this sample tend to be younger, lower-class males, *on average*. These differences are often attributed to the effects of inequality. Strain and relative deprivation perspectives suggest these people do not have the opportunities to achieve their expectations and are thus motivated to use violence. Control perspectives suggest a lack of social control frees them to use violence. Self-help perspectives assume the structure of their relationships leads to more violence. In the next sections I evaluate these perspectives by looking at how respondents' relationships and networks reflect the assumptions of these theories.

## **6.4 Exploring the effects of people's interactions and relationships**

### **6.4.1 Strain and relative deprivation as motivations for violence**

This section explores the core assumptions of strain and relative deprivation theories; that discrepancies between respondents' capabilities and their expectations, an inability to achieve their goals, might motivate them to use violence. These perspectives predict a negative relationship between people's subjective capabilities and their use of violence. People who feel they cannot attain their expectations would be most motivated to use violence. Chapter 5 already showed that many respondents in this sample experience strain. Nevertheless, it is difficult to relate people's subjective perceptions of their capabilities to their use of violence. I compared and contrasted various indicators of these subjective capabilities to the indicators of violence and attitudes discussed above and did not discover any substantial patterns. Some of the people that rated their opportunities and quality of life quite highly also had relatively high violence scores, and the other way around, some of the people that experienced strain were not particularly violent. This is particularly the case for women, whom often feel deprived and dependent, but do not engage in the types of violence measured by the CVI very often, although some do feel less in control over their impulses<sup>18</sup>. Further, it is difficult to evaluate to what extent respondents' perceptions of their quality of life are a result of violence, rather than the other way around, that they would motivate them to commit violence. Upon closer inspection of some marginal relationships between some indicators of strain and the CVI, they are given almost entirely by people whose violent choices turned sour, suggesting a mismatch between people's capabilities and expectations may often follow violence rather than the other way around.

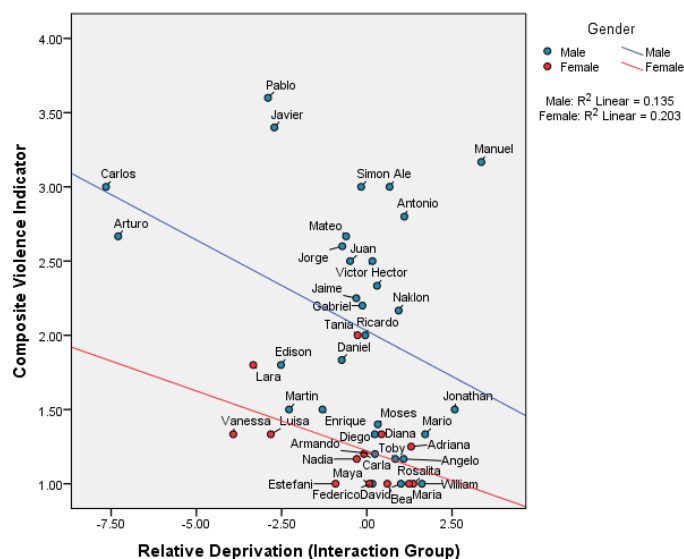
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<sup>18</sup> Strain may perhaps better explain the types of angry violence the measure of self-control taps into, although, again, relationships are weak and the various indicators do not point in the same direction. The argument here is that strain does not explain the type of deadly gun violence explored here very well.

A look at respondents' deprivation relative to their interaction group illustrates these issues in more detail. Relative deprivation theories suggest strain results from negative comparisons, not to a general standard, but to a reference group. The network data collected for this study allow for comparing people to their actual interaction groups, rather than a general standard of quality of life (see p.136 in Chapter 5). Doing badly may not be so difficult if everyone around you is doing equally badly. However, if people's immediate others do better than themselves, have benefited from recent social programmes implemented by Chávez (see Chapter 3) for instance, whereas they have not, these people may experience more strain and more motivations to engage in violence.

Figure 6-5 shows the correlation of the CVI with relative deprivation in comparison to the interaction group in more detail, making a gender distinction.

**Figure 6-5 Correlation between CVI and relative deprivation compared to interaction group (N=44)**



Looking at this graph, we observe a moderate negative correlation ( $r = -.32$ ,  $p = .04$ ); some of the more violent people do indeed feel worse off than their significant others. Nevertheless, it is difficult to interpret this correlation in terms of the assumptions of relative deprivation theory, that relative deprivation motivates people to use violence. This correlation is influenced disproportionately by Arturo (24), a crack cocaine addict who engages in robberies to support his habit, and Carlos (35) who is currently in prison. Both classified themselves as 0 on quality of life but rate their interaction groups much higher. They have high violence scores because of their involvement in various acts of violence, but both allegedly regret their choices and wanted

to take a different route. That they give themselves a 0 and their contacts a much higher score on average, is more easily interpreted as an effect rather than a cause of their violent ways. This was not necessarily their state of mind as they were committing violent offences. Carlos described in detail how money from drugs and robberies allowed him to throw lavish parties for the neighbourhood, suggesting he felt quite satisfied at the time (see quote on p.150 in Chapter 5). Manuel (26) is a good counterexample, he has a CVI score comparable to Carlos, but they are on opposite ends of this measure of relative deprivation. Manuel has no regrets, he even puts himself on the eighth rung of his scale of quality of life, 2.5 rungs above his contacts, on average, and continues to engage in the violent life of *el malandreo*. Strain or relative deprivation are not sufficient nor necessary conditions for continued involvement in the type of violence we explore here, although they may go some way in explaining the meanings and attractions of *el malandreo*, as I will explore in more detail in Chapter 7.

The case of Juan (45) and a particular instance in which he used deadly violence, illustrates these issues in further detail. I spoke to and interviewed Juan on a number of occasions in prison in Cumaná, where he had been incarcerated for murdering a 14-year-old boy in his *barrio*. He had never finished high-school and was a man of many trades, most recently he had taken on artisan woodwork, an occupation he continued within prison walls. He had lived in the same house all of his life, two of his six brothers and sisters as well as his mother, his partner and their children continued to live there. He proudly recounted how they had built it up from a 'pile of zinc' to somewhere they all lived relatively comfortably, in a dense *barrio* on the brink of Cumaná's bustling marine port. He described himself as a key figure in his *barrio*, known and well-liked by most, organising football competitions and theatre plays. The *barrio* is his life, where he works, socialises, and where everyone knows him, as well as Nelson, the boy he had killed. Where other respondents often had to be prompted to list more of their contacts, I asked Juan to stop summing up contacts when he reached 48, most of them living in his *barrio*.

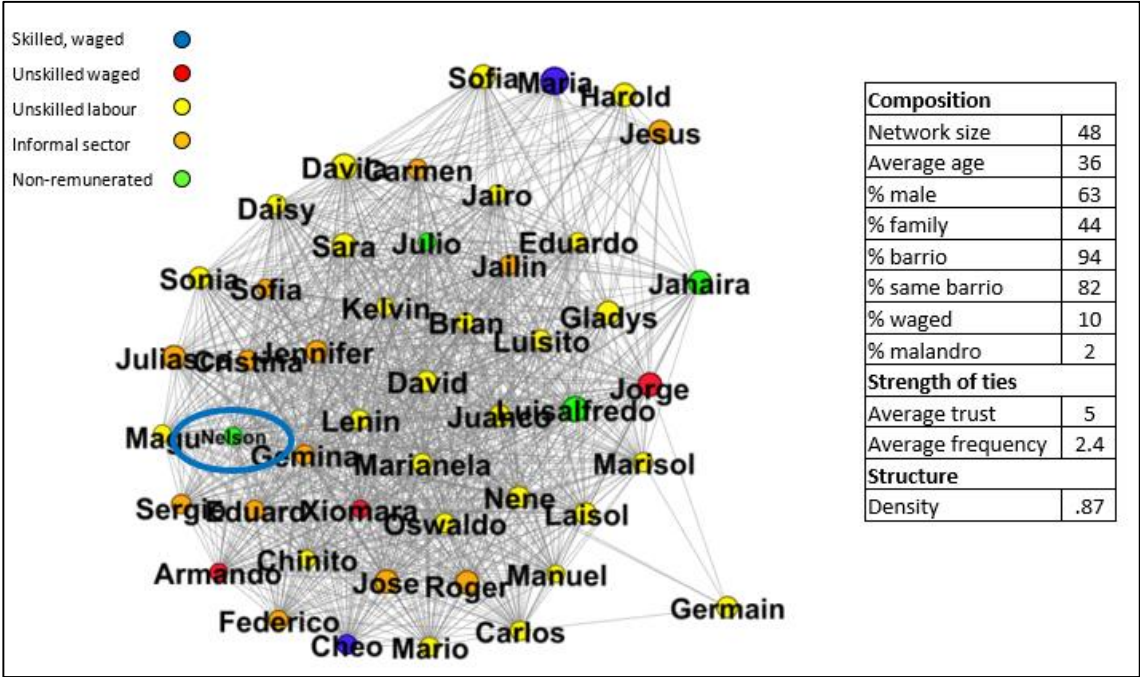
The resulting network is shown in Figure 6-6 below. It shows the contacts<sup>19</sup> Juan mentioned represented by nodes, connected by a line when these contacts also know each other. The colour of the nodes reflects the job sector of these contacts, their size reflects their perceived

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<sup>19</sup> Whereas, for the calculation of network measures I excluded people whom had died or whom respondents no longer had contact with, I included them for the specific case studies in this chapter, because they allow for some interesting observations. Juan was one of the only respondents that agreed to include the person they had had a violent conflict with in their network, allowing me to evaluate their relative positions.

quality of life on a 0-10 scale, and the size of the name labels reflects the trust Juan has in them. Nelson is circled in blue.

Figure 6-6 Juan's network



<sup>1</sup> Graph assembled using Gephi's Force Atlas2 algorithm, using connections between nodes to position them according to centrality

<sup>2</sup> Colour of nodes reflects job sector, size of nodes reflects perceived quality of life, and size of name labels reflects trust.

<sup>3</sup> Nelson, the boy Juan killed, is circled in blue.

This figure shows a densely connected network of relative equals. Relative equals, in terms of perceived quality of life as well as precarious employment, just five people in Juan’s extensive network have regular wages coming in. Most (26) of his contacts are unskilled labourers on the fishing boats and in the tuna factories the Cumanese economy, and Juan’s barrio in particular, rely on. Interestingly, the people that appear to do better, both in terms of jobs and perceived quality of life are on the outer edges, and thus not as central, in his personal network. Juan does not feel comfortable around people that do better, nevertheless, this does not necessarily urge him to be violent towards them (or anyone else), rather avoid them. He did speak of the upper classes in a resentful tone, the ‘bourgeoisie’, that entertains itself in shopping centres and areas of Cumaná he never frequents. The vast majority of people in his network live in a barrio, like him, and he trusts them because they are similar to him. The only person not receiving a 5 on a scale of 1 ‘no trust’ to 5 ‘trust completely’, was Nelson, whom he did not trust at all for reasons that will become clear below.

Juan does experience strain, particularly now he is in prison, he classifies himself on ladder 3 of his 0 to 10 quality of life scale. However, he classifies himself just a little lower than the average of his network (3.5), he does not experience relative deprivation in terms of his most immediate contacts, including Nelson, whom he felt had a lower quality of life than him<sup>20</sup>. People in his barrio and immediate circle are mostly in the same boat, making ends meet. Some (for instance Jorge, whom works for the council, Jesus the owner of a small, informal businesses and his aunt, Maria, whom married a cattle farmer) do better than others, but it is difficult to relate his subjective capabilities to his use of violence.

Juan also has a relatively high CVI score, he had engaged in a number of fights, robberies and had killed 14-year old Nelson. Nevertheless, he was largely good-humoured, respectful and well-trusted by prison staff for instance, evidenced by the fact he was allowed to sleep in a secluded area in the entrance to the prison, away from violent gang sections and was even allowed to carry a knife for his artisan work. He recounted the day he had shot and killed Nelson in painstaking detail. He had 'had to' do it though, it was 'him or me', as he puts it himself:

I'm here because I defended myself. I killed the boy in self-defence. He was going to kill me. He had a gun... It's hard because he was going to kill me, my friend. (...) he was a malandro, selling drugs and stuff, as I was always passing by with the lads... He was envious of me because I did good things for the barrio, he got a gun out on me on several occasions. (...) I had to do it, I had to kill him so that he wouldn't kill me. (...) The boy was going around the barrio threatening people and stuff, very badly behaved... Well, you know, 14 years old, what are you doing going around with a gun? (...) I never had any problems with anyone else in the barrio, everyone always goes 'hey, Juan, come here, do me a favour.' (...) everything happened from Saturday on Sunday, I killed him on Monday. We had an indifference, a discussion on Saturday, as we were setting up theatre. On Monday, he came out from an alleyway and shot at me, but the bullets didn't hit me. After that, when he came back, I'd got a gun too and I shot him in the neck, one single shot.

Semi-structured interview, Juan, Cumaná

Whereas Juan (retrospectively) interprets the source of the conflict in terms of envy, it was not this feeling of resentment that motivated the killing, but the knowledge there was nowhere to

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<sup>20</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 4, it was difficult to get people to talk about and name violent relationships. Juan was one of the only respondents that agreed to include the person they had had a violent conflict with in their network, allowing me to evaluate their relative positions. Interestingly, and also counter to relative deprivation theories, violent interactions often involved relative equals or inferiors rather than superiors. Where people did mention these, they classified the people they had had fights or trouble with as equals, or more usually lower than themselves (as in the case of Juan and Nelson). These rankings can also be seen as a justification that moralises violence, these people were bad people whom deserved to be treated the way they were.

turn. Even if he was strained, and felt disrespected by Nelson, the more immediate pressure in the lead-up to the actual violence was the knowledge he would be killed if he did not act first. The murder was not a consequence of strain, nor relative deprivation, but the irreversible resolution of a conflict in which its protagonists could see few different options.

A strong sense of inevitability emerges from most people's accounts of deadly violence, there was no other way to resolve the conflict than resorting to extreme violence, or leaving the barrio. Because everyone knows everyone, there is little escape. The dense, strong ties in the barrio make confrontation more likely than avoidance. Juan knew Nelson would be coming after him, other people had already warned him. Nelson's views remain illicit, but he may have thought the same. Further, people like Juan feel they are on their own, they talk resentfully of politicians and police officers, whom are perceived as inherently corrupt, and do not expect much from these instances. People's relationships do generate expectations, but it is not that people are not able to live up to these (whether material or symbolic) expectations that motivates (deadly) violence, but the nature of these expectations; that the police is not to be counted on, other people will resort to extreme violence, and one thus has to do the same. Juan has this to say about violence in the barrio:

I had a few fights in the past, but never with anyone in the barrio, with people from other barrios, not my barrio. They used to come and challenge us, and we would come out and... (...) Today you can't fight anyone like that, with bats, fists, no. Today those minors have lots of guts, we have to live with that, always on alert... Almost every weekend they kill someone in the barrio, every weekend they kill people, last night they killed someone. Enough. I'm going to Falcon when I leave here, I have family there, they await me there.

Semi-structured interview, Juan, Cumaná

Where he had a number of fist fights with people from other barrios in the past, he no longer feels these fights can be fought, because of the expectation that guns will be used. He makes reference to what has been described by Fagan et al. (2007) as an 'ecology of danger', a context in which instances of gun violence generate normative expectations that reproduce the use of guns and deadly violence, and will be explored in further detail in Chapter 7. Juan's aunt Maria, who married a cattle rancher in Falcon, a state more than 800 kilometres away, is his only place to turn after prison, leaving behind his barrio and, in essence, his life.

In all, it is difficult to see strain or deprivation relative to the interaction network as a motivation for people to use (deadly) violence. Strain can be interpreted as a consequence of violence if it turns badly, nevertheless, cannot necessarily be seen as a motivation to sustain a life of violence.

These observations suggest perhaps most of all that a life of violence does not pay any personal favours. It may momentarily provide money and respect relative to others, as we will analyse in more detail in Chapter 7, the consequences of a life of violence on a personal level should not be underestimated. This is not to say strain does not have many adverse effects, many respondents were unhappy and felt hard done by. However, motivations stemming from negative social comparison seem unlikely to be the major determinant of the type of violence analysed here. These observations thus do not immediately support the assumptions of strain theories; they are more in line with self-help theories I will explore below. In the next section I look at whether social control perspectives may better account for some differences in people's use of violence.

#### **6.4.2 Social control; The mitigating effects of relationships as social control**

This section explores the core assumptions of social control theories; that strong, dense relationships exert control over behaviour, and can prevent people from engaging in violence. Control perspectives assume everyone has the capacity for violence, but strong ties to conventional society can mitigate this capacity. Chapter 5 already showed there is no lack of informal social control in the barrio, this section looks at whether perhaps more violent people experience less social control, particularly from their relationships. Again, it is difficult to relate some measures of social control stemming from people's relationships with the type of violence analysed here. I compared and contrasted various indicators of the strength and quality of people's relationships (trust, frequency of contact, ...) <sup>21</sup> with the measures of violence and, again, did not observe patterns supportive of control theories. On the contrary, more violent people appear to have stronger and denser relationships in some respects. This supports the few studies that have used personal networks to evaluate the effects people's relationships, and found that more violent or deviant people's networks do not differ substantially from those of non-violent people, or not in the expected direction, some find denser networks that are highly integrated into the neighbourhood (de Cuyper et al., 2013; Roman et al., 2012). Interestingly, little suggests that women are more or less constrained by their networks and that this could thus explain they do not often engage in the behaviours measured by the CVI. I did not find substantial differences

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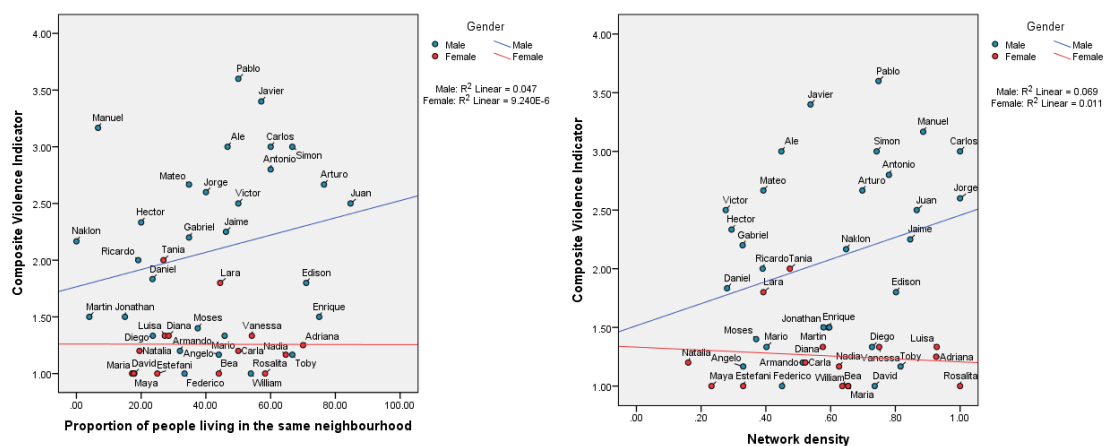
<sup>21</sup> Note that indicators of people's relationships may be influenced by the amount of people they mentioned, the size of their networks. It is likely that people who mentioned less contacts mentioned stronger ties overall (see Chapter 4 and 5). Further, as more violent people mentioned slightly less contacts, on average, this may influence these correlations. However, I also calculated partial correlations for all these measures, controlling for network size, and did not find any substantial differences.



in the type or quality of relationships between women and men, nor between more or less violent women.

A closer look at some correlations illustrates these observations in more detail. We have already seen that the barrio is densely connected and there is plenty of informal social control, however, people that have less contacts living in their barrio could be less subject to these forms of informal social control. Further, people that are tied up into dense networks, where their contacts know everyone else, can expect these others will hear about any deviant behaviour and they may thus be restrained from behaving violently. Figure 6-7 shows the correlation between the CVI and the average proportion of respondents' contacts that live in the same sector ( $r=.19$ ,  $p=.21$ ) as well as network density ( $r=.18$ ,  $p=.24$ ).

**Figure 6-7 Correlations between proportion living in the same sector, network density and CVI (N=45)**

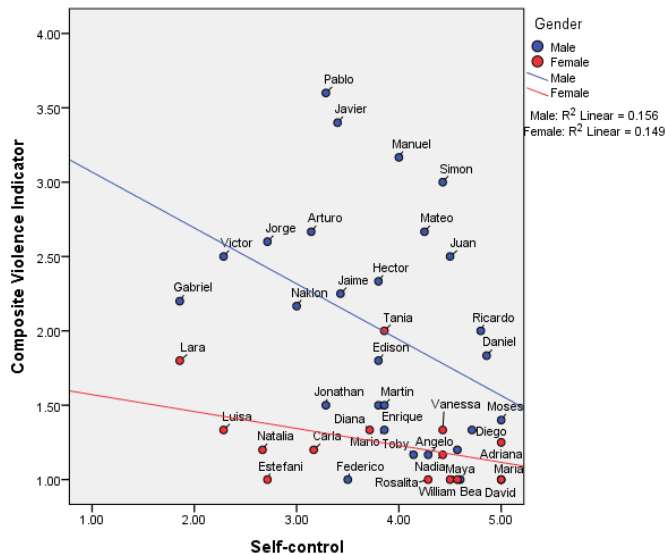


These correlations are not significant, and in the opposite to expected direction, at least for men. Some of the men that have more frequently engaged in the types of violence of interest in this thesis appear to have a slightly larger proportion of contacts living in their own sector, and denser networks. This suggests that, at least some, more violent men are not less, but more constrained by their networks. Pablo's (17) network for instance includes many people he has known all his life and that also know each other, predominantly barrio residents he more or less grew up with. I will explore his network and how it does indeed provide control over his behaviour, but also generates conflicts that are difficult to escape, in further detail below. Moses (21) who has a relatively sparse network and a small percentage of contacts living in the same barrio, has not engaged in much of the violence explored here. His network is analysed in the next section, showing that rather than freeing Moses to use violence, this relatively sparse

network allows him to escape violence. These observations thus suggest strong, dense relationships are not very efficient in stopping people from behaving violently.

More recent control theories assume people's early relationships instil them with the ability for self-control. Figure 6-8 shows the correlation between the composite measure of self-control discussed above and the CVI ( $r=-.22$ ,  $p=.19$ ).

**Figure 6-8 Correlation between CVI and composite measure of self-control (N=42)**

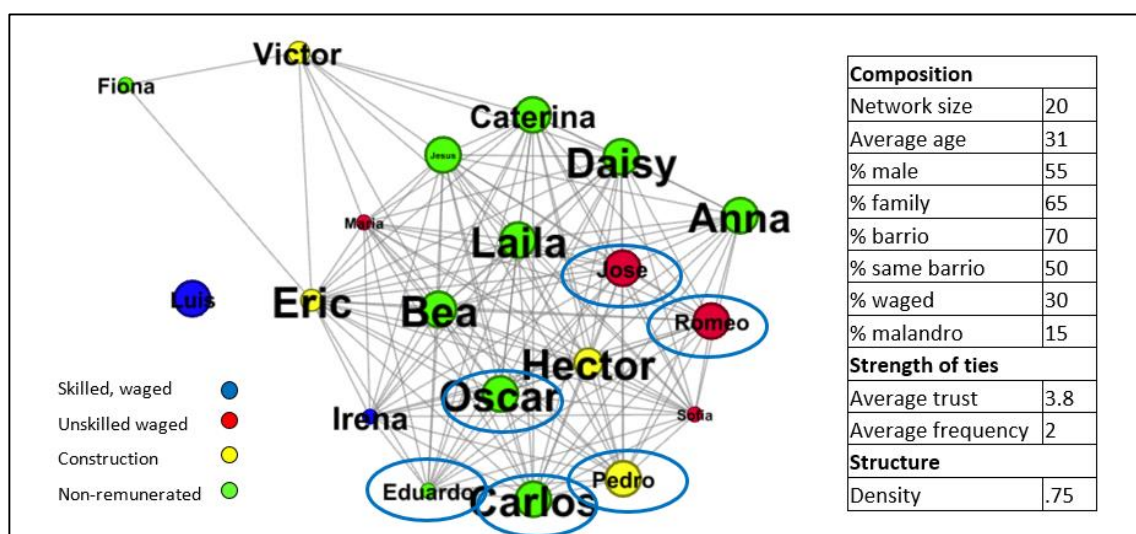


Again, this relationship is not significant, and some of the more violent people also felt they could control themselves, whereas many people that had not used a lot of violence felt the opposite. Interestingly, many women score lower on these items, indicating they often feel less in control. These observations may indicate that people who engage in the type of violence explored here do not necessarily feel they are less in control. Malandros in particular often need to give an impression of control, angry indiscriminate violence is not appreciated as we will see in Chapter 7. Manuel, although he admitted to having killed at least three people and hitting his now ex-girlfriend was adamant he knew how to control himself. If he did 'fly off the handle' it would be for a very good reason, like when one of his friends was killed. These people do not necessarily lack informal social control mechanisms, whether external or internal, they often see themselves as implementing social control where other means of achieving justice are unavailable.

The case of Pablo (17), a self-identified malandro with the highest CVI score in this sample, illustrates how some of his contacts do indeed restrain him from violence, yet the pressures of violent friends and feuds he has engaged in are the more pressing ties that reinforce his use of

violence. A closer look at his network illustrates in more detail the assumptions of social control theories. Figure 6-9 below shows a picture of the contacts Pablo mentioned, and the relationships between them. A line between contacts shows they know each other. The size of the nodes representing Pablo's contacts reflects how frequently Pablo sees these people, with larger nodes indicating more frequent contact. The size of their names indicates trust Pablo has in them, with larger fonts indicating more trust. The colours represent these contacts' professional situation.

**Figure 6-9 Pablo (17)'s network**



<sup>1</sup> Graph assembled using Gephi's Force Atlas2 algorithm, using connections between nodes to position them according to centrality

<sup>2</sup> Colour of nodes reflect job sector, size of nodes reflect frequency of contact, and size of name labels reflect trust

<sup>3</sup> Pablo's gang is circled in blue, % malandro in table refers to those that had no other professions, i.e. Carlos, Oscar and Eduardo

Pablo lives with his girlfriend, Anna, three of his seven half-sisters (Bea, Caterina and Daisy), and their respective children in the house he grew up in, in a relatively violent sector high up in Catia. His father Eric, a mechanic, lives a few miles away, he trusts him substantially, but does not see him that often. His mother, Laila, is one of the most central people in his network, she knows most of the people Pablo mentioned too. With a recent day job as an apprentice at a car mechanics, Pablo earns just 2,050 bolivars a month, hardly enough to satisfy his tastes. Luis, his boss, is the only unconnected (weak) tie in his network, he does not know anyone else<sup>22</sup>. After work, Pablo hangs out with other malandros on the street corner, Carlos, Oscar, Pedro, Romeo, Jose and Eduardo, whom are circled in blue. Three in ten (30%) of the relationships Pablo

<sup>22</sup> Atypically for this sample, he found this job through an advertisement in the newspaper, not through his network.

mentioned are deviant ties. Nevertheless, like Pablo, most of these people have more formal jobs, only Oscar and Carlos are full-time malandros. Eduardo is currently in prison for homicide. They rob to top up their meagre earnings and are involved in a number of 'culebras'<sup>23</sup> with other sectors. Pablo does not quite trust Pedro, Romeo or Jose, although he sees them all on a daily basis. Hector is his cousin, he is not a malandro but does hang out with them, and knows them all.

A number of things stand out. First the group of malandros is not a separate clique, it is completely embedded in his network, and the barrio. Further, Pablo has many ties to law-abiding people, which are also stronger contacts in terms of trust. Nevertheless, most of these ties are unemployed women. This speaks to theories that look at the construction of masculine identities in opposition to feared, female identities. Through his contacts with violent men, Pablo can provide means and distance himself from the dependent lives of his sisters, whom all have babies and rely on men to provide for them. I will evaluate these theories in more detail in chapter 7.

Importantly, none of his sisters are involved in violence and all very worried for their youngest sibling, frequently urging him to stay away from the street corner. Pablo's network is also quite dense, 75% of all possible ties between people are present. Control theories suggest he would be constrained from violence through these ties. Indeed, the very day I interviewed him, his mum had been reprimanded by neighbours about his behaviour, which had her threatening to disown him, never to speak to him again. One of these neighbours, Marta (54, described how she too had complained to his mother and gone to reprimand Pablo himself after he and a few others had beaten up her heroin-addicted son, Toby, allegedly for trying to rob them of drugs. She made reference to the strong ties between their families, reminding Pablo of how he had grown up with them. Her words are reminiscent of the moral order of the barrio that was described in Chapter 5, a fragile order that can be and is often maintained with violence, but should never be used against barrio residents themselves.

It was them who did it, and I went, I'm a mother in the end, my son lives on the streets and perhaps he's not an excellent human being, but he's my son, and I went and gave them their dues. (...) they go around harassing people, people in the barrio, and it's not right, because if I saw you grow up, I saw you become a man, now you're going to come and attack me, you're going to offer me bullets and threats, that's what I told them, 'you know who my son is; and who is Marta (sic.)? Marta partakes in the barrio and

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<sup>23</sup> Literally meaning snakes, a colloquialism for often deadly vendettas that will be explored in detail in Chapter 7.

does good for everyone.’ (...) I went up to see them in despair, I didn’t offend them but I went and told them many things and asked them how it was possible that they permitted this, that it wasn’t fair, four people against one, and they have no right to beat up my son (...) I asked ‘why don’t you go and confront the police, start a fight with a police officer, with a malandro from the gang down below, they have guns, my son doesn’t have a gun’ (...) then one of them shuffled his hands kind of weirdly, as if he had a gun there so I said ‘you know that if you shoot me or my close ones, if you kill me, you pay for it, write it down, because that doesn’t square, I’m not a dog without a soul, I’ll tell you that if you hit me, hurt me or do anything, write it down that it doesn’t stay that way, because you don’t know who’s behind me.’ I don’t have malandros, not in my house nor my family, but in my family there are police officers, my daughter’s husband. She told me, ‘look, I’ll send a couple of masked guys and I’ll order them to...’ but I told her, ‘no, I don’t want that, I want this to be resolved and I don’t want them to beat up Toby again, because they know Marta will be there to keep an eye out.’

Unstructured interview, female resident, Catia

Pablo had told me of this beating too, but he felt justified because Toby had robbed them. In absence of other means (they could certainly not turn to an already distrusted police over drugs), violence was a way to resolve this conflict too. Nevertheless, Pablo and his associates could not use deadly violence. If they had killed Toby, they would certainly have faced reprisals. In ‘merely’ beating up a lone, frail heroin addict, they had little fear of reprisal. Nonetheless, this type of violence is off bounds against other gangs that, like them, demonstrate their ferocity through posturing with guns and boasting of killings, as we will see in Chapter 7.

The basic assumption of control theories, that strong ties instil people with informal social control mechanisms is indeed supported, but these do not necessarily restrain Pablo from using violence. Pablo’s relationships, though doing their hardest in trying to discourage him, cannot constrain him. He felt guilty about disappointing his mum and sisters, but had no intention to leave the street corner. His ties to the gang are the more pressing ones, falling out with one of the other boys could cost him his life. Further, the gang offers him a warped sense of security, protection from the *culebras* he has amassed with other sectors through the many shoot-outs he has engaged in. Pablo feels trapped and fearful, he does not see how he can escape these conflicts. This also seems to be the reason he feels deprived in comparison to his network (rating his quality of life as 3, almost three rungs lower than the average of his network<sup>24</sup>), he feels anxious and trapped. Nevertheless, the violence he uses is not given by this relative position, nor the amount of control he is subject to from his network, but by the dynamics of the *barrio*, and the dynamics of conflict with other malandros. He cannot simply hide or run away in a *barrio*

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<sup>24</sup> He rates the other malandros in his network equally, as 3, their lives are fearful and in many ways constrained to the *barrio*.

where everyone knows him, and, particularly in violence with other gangs, he cannot count on different forms of resolution but the exchange of gunfire, hoping that his enemies will perish first.

In all, more violent people do not necessarily have weaker bonds than non-violent people. Dense network structures are observed right across the sample, and even the most violent people have plenty of relationships that offer informal social controls in their networks. Further, social control theories cannot explain gender differences in the CVI, women are not necessarily stricter tied into their networks, or more constrained from violence. In all, whether or not people are more or less constrained by their networks, have stronger or weaker ties, more or less trust in these ties, and even whether or not they feel they can control themselves, none of these seem to influence their involvement in the type of violence explored here, questioning the basic tenets of social control theories. Instead, these observations are more in line with self-help theories, which I explore in the next section.

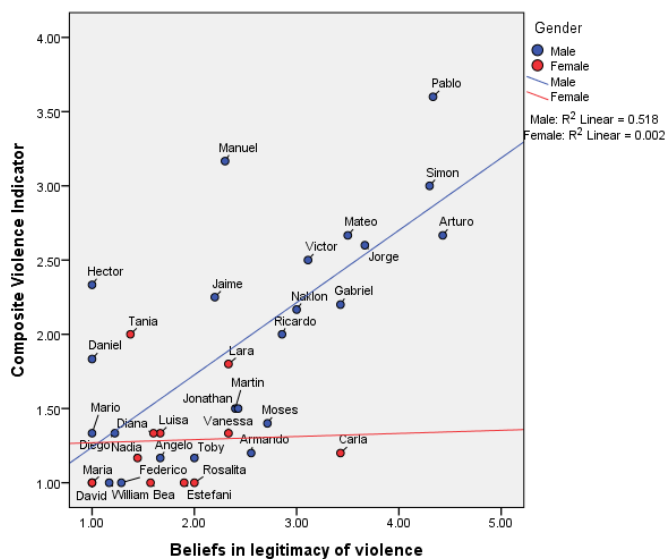
#### **6.4.3 Self-help; violence as social control in dense interaction networks**

Self-help perspectives suggest that, rather than keeping people from violence, strong, dense relationships can generate violence. Violence is seen, not as a maladaptive attribute, but as a conflict resolution mechanism, where other mechanisms (such as avoidance and third party settlement) are unavailable. They shift the focus from individual attributes and positions to the structure of relationships in which violence emerges. Chapter 5 showed that indeed, the barrio has no accepted hierarchy, everyone is equal and nobody has a more legitimate claim over anybody else. Previous examples showed that people's networks too, tend to be made up of relative equals that get together frequently and are capable of exerting informal social control. In previous sections we saw how neither strain nor social control perspectives adequately explain some of the patterns observed here. The examples of Pablo and Juan show they may be strained and even relatively deprived but it is difficult to relate their use of violence to these feelings of deprivation. Further, they are certainly not lacking effective controls. The network does exert control over people, relationships keep them in line. However, this does not necessarily prevent violence, on the contrary, in certain situations people need to take control using violence. These people turned violent on one, or even a number of occasions, not necessarily because of their individual attributes, but because the context of the barrio, and in the case of Pablo, also the feuds of el malandreo, demand they do so. The dense interaction networks make avoidance difficult and violence inevitable at times, there is often no other way

out. What unites the diverse people in this sample, violent and non-violent alike, is a densely connected network of relative equals, and little recourse to avoidance or formal conflict resolution mechanisms. In this section I explore these assumptions in a little more detail, looking specifically at attitudes towards the legitimacy of violence, and the case of Moses.

Figure 6-10 shows the correlation between the composite measure of respondents' beliefs in the legitimacy of violence described above and the CVI ( $r=.68$ ,  $p=.00$ ).

**Figure 6-10 Correlation between beliefs in legitimacy of violence and CVI (N=35)**

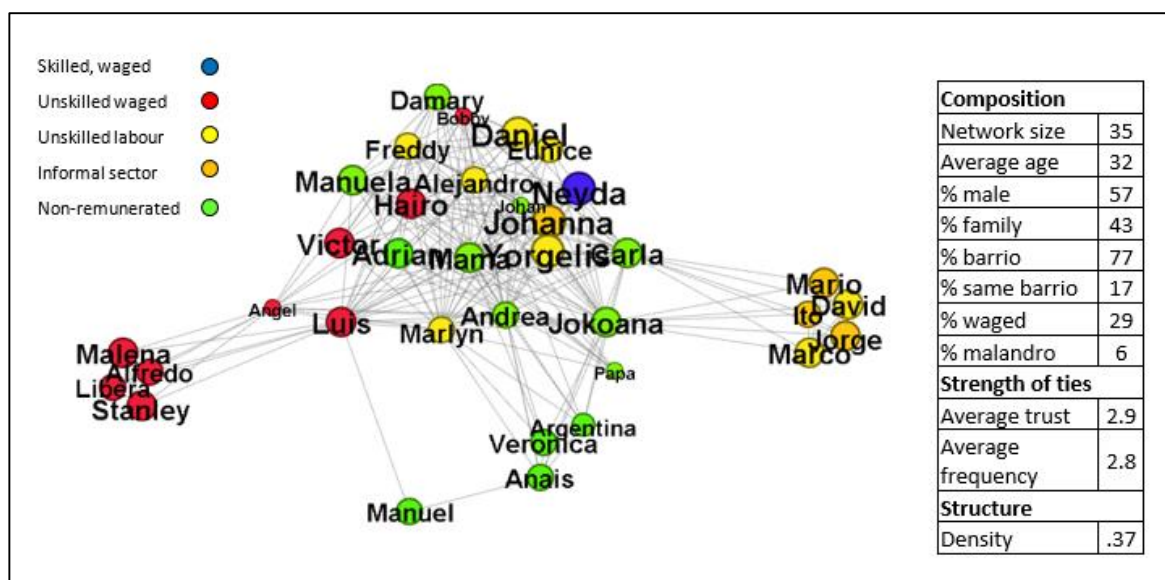


This is one of the strongest relationships between a number of different measures and the type of violence explored here. People who have used more violence than others strongly believe their violence is justified, and even necessary, given the failings of the justice system. Even Hector (26), whom, as a policeman, ostentatiously preached the legitimacy and supremacy of the law as indicated in the scatterplot, owned up to violence beyond the law, as the quote in chapter 5 showed (see p. 150). These people have little belief in the legitimacy or efficacy of the justice system. Many respondents, when asked whether it was justified to kill or take the law in their own hands answered with a tentative 'well it shouldn't be that way, but given our circumstances, actually, yes'.

In Chapter 5, I briefly discussed Moses' (21) precarious situation, sharing a four-bedroom shack with his mother, nine of his ten siblings from seven different fathers, and some of their own partners and children (a battalion as he referred to it himself). His household has real trouble making ends meet, but he still puts himself on ladder 5 of a 0-10 scale of quality of life, slightly higher than the average of his network (4.7). At his young age, he had worked as a security guard

at a private bus station, a labourer, concierge, and had earned some extra cash as a break-dancer. Most recently he had joined the army, inspired by his most recent stepfather. Moses' network is shown in Figure 6-11, with nodes showing the contacts he mentioned, connected by lines when they also know each other. The colours of the nodes reflect their job sector, their size their quality of life on a 0-10 scale, and the size of the node labels reflects the trust Moses has in them.

**Figure 6-11 Moses' (21) network**



<sup>1</sup> Graph assembled using Gephi's Force Atlas2 algorithm, using connections between nodes to position them according to centrality

<sup>2</sup> Colour of nodes reflects job sector, size of nodes reflects perceived quality of life, and size of name labels reflects trust.

We can observe a much sparser network than most other respondents (37% of all possible ties are present, compared to 60% on average across the sample, 87% in Juan's case and 75% in Pablo's case). Moses' network has four distinct groups, or cliques, although there are no disconnected nodes, everyone knows at least someone else. The group towards the left represents his army colleagues, on the right is a group of break-dancers he often practices with on a central Caracas' square, at the bottom a few friends from high school, and at the core his extended family and the few people he knows in the barrio. Only twelve people (17% of his network) live(d) in his barrio, eight of whom in the same house. Moses does not like to hang around the streets, because they are so violent. He recounted a number of robberies and near-death encounters where bullets had just razed his body. Two of his friends, Bobby and Johan, had died. Johan too had been a malandro, as had his dad, whom he had never known. He described Johan in endearing terms, someone he could trust with his secrets, but went 'crazy' on weekends. Nevertheless, Moses has little respect for malandros in general, they are always



in hiding, cannot leave the barrio. He has much more respect for his older brothers, Alejandro, and Hairo and the boys of the breakdance group.

Moses had not engaged in the types of gun and gang violence of interest here, but he did believe it was legitimate to respond with violence at times. His account of violence in his barrio is quite insightful, particularly regarding an instance where he had had to get involved too:

Before they were constantly exchanging fire [in my sector], that has stopped. The last shoot-out I witnessed close to my home is about a year ago, from then onwards, nothing... **How did it change?** Well, like I said, many of those who hung out there have died now, at the moment they're purely youngsters, purely new malandros. New malandros that start learning. It's like cycles, chains and it will never end. I'm 100% certain that, well in my opinion, whilst I am in this world, and whilst I live, I know that, in this time, for me, it will never end. (...) Like I said, you get used to it. You don't see it as another world anymore. Here, people live for the day. It's a question of habit. **Aren't you scared?** No, when the problem doesn't involve me, when it's someone else, no. **Have people already had a problem with you?** Yes, one single time. Close to my home a guy messed with one of my little sisters and I seized, when I heard that he had messed with her... when I saw him, I hit him hard, and it emerged that he was the brother of a malandro from around there, a murderer. I moved to a different barrio for like three months. After three months I came back here. **How do you mean, he messed with your sister?** Well, as she was going to school he started messing with her, telling her things, all sadistic, morbid, filth... and I didn't like it. I had to do it.

Semi-structured interview, Moses, Catia

Like so many others, Moses refers to the inevitability of responding the way he did, he 'had to do it'. The interconnectedness of the barrio means he could not just let it go. Importantly, through his challenge, he set up his own cycle of potentially deadly violence, which he was able to escape by moving to another barrio for a while. An option that was not immediately available to people like Juan, whose life is much more centred around the barrio. Pablo had similarly been sent away to a different city, in an effort to avoid the escalation of a conflict, nevertheless, upon his return, he just started hanging out with the boys on the corner again. Violence becomes necessary in the dense and informal spaces of the barrio, where reputation is important, but sadly deadly. That these people acted violently on different occasions had little to do with their individual attributes, but more with the relational structure of the barrio, where conflict cannot be readily avoided, and failure to respond to status challenges affects one's reputation, at least if one is male. This particular instance of violence also draws our attention to an important gender pattern, whereas it was Moses' sister that had been insulted, it was Moses, and not his sister, whom 'had to' put it right. These types of behaviours are not expected of women; in the barrio, men are expected to provide, financial means as well as physical protection, for the

household. Even if women experience strain, and enjoy flirting with malandros, as we will see in Chapter 7, violence is not expected of them.

### **6.5 Conclusion**

This chapter explored some connections between inequality and violence at the micro-level, looking specifically at how people's interactions and relationships reflect the assumptions of strain/relative deprivation, social control and self-help theories. Looking at these relationships, the connections between inequality and the type of deadly gun violence that is the interest of this thesis are not as straightforward as traditional theories often assume. This type of violence does not seem to follow from strain associated with inequality or from ineffective controls, but from the pattern of relationships in which inequality is embedded. This chapter found that people who experience strain and relative deprivation are not necessarily more motivated to use violence, on the contrary strain and relative deprivation may often follow violence. Strain may exacerbate the meaning and power of violent identities as I will explore in the next chapter. This chapter also showed more violent people do not necessarily lack social controls. On the contrary, they often perceive themselves as applying social control, through violence. In all, strong, dense relationships do not appear able to halt this type of violence, rather they appear to generate it. Rumour and expectations in dense networks make confrontation more likely than avoidance.

In all, where we found indications of substantial differences in strain, strength of ties and patterns of sociability between the barrio and the centre in Chapter 5, these are not present between people all or not involved in the type of violence explored here. Whether or not the people in this sample have access to different ideas and opportunities or are more or less constrained than others is not related to how frequently they have been involved in this type of violence. This questions theories that look at individual differences and suggests the overall structure of relationships in which these people are embedded is more important in understanding this type of violence. High levels of violence in the barrio may have more to do with general conditions in the barrio rather than the attributes of violent people. Self-help perspectives suggest violence is more prevalent in poorer sections of society, not because of perceived or relative poverty, nor a lack of informal control mechanisms, but because of people's interaction patterns. They predict more confrontational (violent) conflict where ties are more frequent, avoidance difficult and authoritative third parties absent.

Overall, this chapter suggests we need to understand the dynamics of violent interactions more than static personality characteristics. This chapter made an important contribution by looking at people's interaction networks as the source of their expectations and relationships. Personal networks are a step in the right direction, by using more concrete boundaries to evaluate the effects of inequality, but they still make an abstraction of the many ties people have. Further, qualitative data were essential in interpreting how these relationships provide informal social control, and exploring violent interactions in more detail. Even though the sample was small, and the measures of violence imperfect, these findings question whether it makes sense to continue looking for individual differences that in effect stigmatise 94% of this sample – almost all respondents living in the barrio have a shortage of something, this does not mean they will turn violent. In chapter 7 we briefly address the meaning of violent identities before evaluating violence between malandros, not as an individual attribute, but as informal social control, as self-help in a context of ambiguity and uncertainty. It shows how actual interactions generate expectations of violence that continuously feed the need for violence, and reinforce the power of violent identities.

## CHAPTER 7 EL MALANDREO; EXISTENTIAL MEANING, RULES AND VIOLENCE

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the meaning and expressions of 'el malandreo', a Venezuelan gangster identity, with particular attention for the deadly violence it applies. Much of the deadly violence in Venezuela is attributable to malandros (see Chapter 3) but little research has evaluated this type of violence or its presumed protagonists in this context (Olimpo et al., 2010; Rodgers and Baird, 2014). Based on primary qualitative data this chapter shows that the violence malandros use is not entirely related to historical inequalities. While these inequalities can be seen to facilitate the development of el malandreo as an institution, that is, as a social structure that proscribes and encourages certain behaviours, overall it is the internal logic of cyclically violent vendettas that appears to sustain these behaviours most strongly. My argument is that violence between malandros is not so much motivated by disempowering social structures but by fear and previous violence that spread rapidly through the horizontal reciprocity networks of el malandreo. The 'culebra', meaning snake, a fitting metaphor and Venezuelan colloquialism for retaliatory violence that is used to refer both to the violent conflict or vendetta itself, as well as the person or group with whom the conflict (Zubillaga, 2011), has important endogenous feedback effects, sowing the conditions for future violence and simultaneously sustaining el malandreo as a governance structure.

Previous chapters explored how inequality is reflected in barrio residents' relationships, and how these conditions affect individual propensities for violence. Chapter 6 concluded that it is difficult to attribute individual differences in violence to the presumed effects of inequality, i.e. relative deprivation or a lack of controls. It was suggested more relational interpretations may better explain the connections between inequality and violence. This chapter engages with the relational perspectives on violent identities and violence that were introduced in Chapter 2, with a case study of el malandreo. It makes use of institutional and network theories to frame the data. Institutional theory 'examines the processes and mechanisms by which structures, schemas, rules, and routines become established as authoritative guidelines for social behavior' (Scott, 2005). Network theory looks for patterns or regularities in relationships between interacting units (Papachristos 2010). These theories are paradigms that have been applied in a variety of disciplines and adopted by diverse theoretical perspectives. They contain conceptual tools for organising empirical data without the necessity to specify clear hypotheses. They allow me to let the data speak.

The chapter builds on primary data to develop an understanding of el malandreo as an institution that sanctions violence. Malandros, Venezuelan slang for delinquents of various trades and assignations tend to associate in relatively disorganised groups more or less embedded in the barrio. This chapter argues that what weaves these varying shapes and forms together is a conflictive network of fear and lethal reprisal. El malandreo found substantial following in Venezuela's barrios, providing individuals with existential meaning and respect, and the barrio with informal social control (see also chapter 5). This chapter explores in further detail the construction of violent masculinities in interaction with the community, as well as other malandros.

As explored in Chapter 2, many perspectives singularly focus on the material distribution of resources in explaining the meaning of these identities. These perspectives are important in fleshing out the exclusionary practices and contradictions that are so evident across the globe today, not least in Venezuela. Nevertheless, they often inadvertently provide excuses for deprived and disrespected offenders that have no other options but to engage in a life of violence, tacitly assuming that in providing young men with formal opportunities, the gangs will simply go away. The Venezuelan case is interesting not just because it has a long history of gangs (Bolívar et al., 2012), but because they seemingly increased violent activity over the last 10 or 15 years where inclusive policies have been introduced that should have made these gangs less attractive. Although these policies have not necessarily provided the target group of disenfranchised young men with more opportunities (Gonzalez Plessmann, 2010), it is questionable in how far simply doing so would deinstitutionalise the complex governance structures of el malandreo. More relational interpretations look beyond the material distribution of resources, at the construction of identities in the context of actual social relationships. Nevertheless, these perspectives are incomplete without an understanding of the relationships through which violence itself flows. This chapter argues that the historical emergence of gangs can be related to exogenous social relations, such as unequal opportunity structures and a lack of formal social control, gang violence follows a dynamic that is endogenous to these gang networks. What sustains and further legitimises the institution of el malandreo today, over and above poor living conditions, is its deadly, reciprocal violence. The malandro claims to protect the barrio from random violence, through what he considers to be legitimate violence, generating cycles of retaliatory violence. This chapter engages with relational perspectives by showing how the dynamics of la culebra generate an ecology of danger, where fear and violence spread quickly. Malandros adopt ever-deadlier violence

because it is (a) condoned (even expected) behaviour within el malandreo and (b) embedded in a chain of fear and retaliation, affecting evermore neighbours<sup>1</sup> in the dense reciprocity networks of el malandreo.

## **7.2 The data, malandros as dynamic networks of interacting individuals**

This chapter draws predominantly on recorded interviews with 45 unique respondents that had at one point or another engaged in el malandreo, in Caracas and Cumaná. Most of those (29) were interviewed in group situations, ten completed a semi-structured network interview<sup>2</sup>, another six were people I conducted unstructured interviews with and had also engaged in el malandreo. This chapter also relies on unrecorded interviews, fieldnotes and observational material gathered in a period of around three months towards the end of my fieldwork, where I gained access to a number of sites of encounter and exchange between malandros, allowing me to compare and contrast the structure of four different gang groups below. Chapter 4 described how I first attempted to find these people in hospitals and a Cumanese prison, made contact with two gang groups through an ex-malandro in Catia and, as I gained more confidence, approached them on the streets of Cumaná, accompanied by a representative of a local Consejo Comunal. The many ethical issues surrounding this approach are also addressed in detail in Chapter 4.

In this section, I look at the structure of relationships within four of these sites, as well as connections to the community and illicit drug markets, conceiving of these groups as I defined them in Chapter 2, as local organisational expressions (or ‘franchises’ Hagedorn (2008)) of the broader identity of el malandreo, that are shaped in interaction with other gangs and the wider community. The groups often take on the name of their street or sector, reinforcing their relationship with the community, and simultaneously setting them apart from groups in different sectors. Nevertheless, rather than clearly defined groups, they are dynamic networks of interacting individuals (Morselli, 2009). The particular identities single gang groups in Venezuela might claim divert attention away from a broader malandro identity that actually unites each of these competing groups in their defiance of debilitating conditions, but simultaneously sets them against each other through the exchange of violence. In this chapter I show how different meanings are generated from different interactions; interactions with the

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<sup>1</sup> Network theory uses the term neighbours to refer to nodes, or actors, whom are connected.

<sup>2</sup> Of whom just 3 currently self-identified as malandros, but 2 prisoners, 3 mala conductas and both ex-malandros had at one point engaged in el malandreo.

community lift malandros above their surroundings, as elite protectors of the barrio. Interactions with other malandros generate shared meanings about the violent other and legitimise violence against this other. I argue that the most pressing interactions that define each gang group are their *culebras*, referring both to the vendetta-type conflict itself as well as to the people or groups with whom the conflict exists.

### **7.2.1 Internal structure**

Organisationally speaking, the malandros I observed in Caracas were quite different from those in Cumaná, but only the prison gang had an explicit top-down hierarchy. In Cumaná, two distinct gangs 'Carro Azul' and 'Carro Paisa/El Tren'<sup>3</sup> are said to rule the city, evoking the classic picture of hierarchically organised gangs. It is not clear whether this reflects an actual top-down structure. Felson (2006) draws attention to mimicry at the core of gang myths and stereotypes. He notes that gangs often take on the name of better-known gangs, to foster a ferocious image. In the end this is a self-protection strategy that prevents other gangs from 'messing' with them. It appears that in Cumaná too, individual gangs are not bound necessarily by authority or monetary structures, but more by a symbolic allegiance that underlines their ferocity. They are 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1991) that are not based on everyday face-to-face interactions, but give the gang more clout. Both Carro Azul and Paisa have their origin in prison, where a strict separation is observed. When people enter prison they are put in the pavilion that corresponds with their affiliation. People that are not affiliated with either band are usually left to endure their time in peace, though they will certainly pick up relationships, tales and tricks that they take away for their lives outside. As people from different barrios 'graduate' from prison – they take these links and even identities with them, back to the barrio. Different sectors within the city of Cumaná appear to have signed up to one or other band this way.

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<sup>3</sup> Apart from these names of overarching gang groups in Cumaná, all other names are anonymised so that they cannot be linked to actual groups or individuals within them.

**Picture 7-1 Prison ward Carro Paísa (Cumaná, 2012)**



I visited a prison ward ruled by Carro Paísa (see Picture 7-1). It housed around 30 prisoners in just a couple of dorms, surrounded by a courtyard with an inflatable pool. The leader ('pran') on the ward itself was the one authorising my entrance, not the official prison guards. Unlike the gangs I met on the streets, there was a clear authority structure. He proudly told me he was the only one allowed to eat with a knife and fork. To demonstrate his power, he threw a 'pan de jamon', a savoury stuffed bread that is a typical Venezuelan Christmas delicacy I had brought in, onto the ground, upon which prisoners fell to the floor and scrambled for pieces like a pack of wolves.

The gang I met on the streets of Cumaná convened late afternoon in a group of around six to ten men in a local square, or Angelo's (37) house nearby. They had officially taken a less violent path; as part of a pacification project they had been offered jobs in return for putting down their arms. As I sat with them one Friday night, it was clear that they were still involved in selling drugs, and as the night went by, they proudly showed me their guns. Wives and children assembled with us as transactions occurred. The conflicts they put to rest were those within the barrio, generating a fragile peace. The culebras outside the barrio remained, as did the necessity for keeping their guns. They had not sided with either faction of Carro Azul, or Paísa, yet kept their own name 'Los Lobos'.

The gangs I observed in Caracas did not have such distinct names, they identified with the street or sector in which they sold drugs and that were associated with their reputation and culebras.



**Picture 7-2 Surrounds of Calle Real (Caracas, 2012)**

The gang of Calle Real had just 2 permanent members, Mauro (18) and Azul (26). Azul moved around on a Zimmer frame after having been shot a few years back. He cut up drugs inside whilst Mauro kept an eye on the street. Mauro's dad lived on the street, but he only stayed there on from Thursday to Sunday and went away during the week, 'to avoid trouble'. At various points, mostly late afternoon and on weekends, up to ten others would join, congregating on Azul's mother's porch. This included people that did not engage in criminal activity, as well as people that said they committed robberies and kidnappings, often 'freelancing' next to more formal, but irregular, jobs. Ramos (34) now lived quite a few miles away, and associated with a different group there, but still had family on Calle Real and frequented regularly<sup>4</sup>.

The gang of Calle Bolivar assembled in an alleyway (see Picture 7-3) a few sectors up from Calle Real. It was comprised of three drug sellers. Manuel (26) was their leader by seniority, though he vehemently denied any official leadership. Two associates had been killed on the street just a few months earlier, for 'personal problems'. Manuel did not want to talk about what happened and had relocated to an apartment block in a satellite city, in an effort to avoid these problems, returning frequently to oversee drug sales. He took pride in explaining to me that his rule was a proper democracy, the three members had equal rights to sales and incomes. Everyone sold what they could and took their own profits home. He saw himself as mere facilitator in a spot that had always been a drug spot, just outside his family home. He retired from robberies when the old occupants vacated the spot.

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<sup>4</sup> This was the only group which I was able to stay in touch with after my main fieldwork period. Although they did not appear to have many issues at the time, Ramos has since been killed by a culebra and both Azul and Mauro were in prison around a year after fieldwork.

As on Calle Real and with Los Lobos, there appears to be some sort of specialisation in terms of criminal activities, but this is based more on personal preference than a clear division of labour within the gang.

**Picture 7-3 Calle Bolivar (Caracas, 2012)**



Although many of the boys I observed had killed and lived from illegal activity, group boundaries are blurry. Many boys show up irregularly, making an 'extra buck' after their daytime jobs. They identified with the sector they congregated in, but did not use markers, tattoos etc. to safeguard this identity. Many did not even live there anymore, at least not all the time, as was the case with Mauro, Manuel and Ramos. These sectors do carry a reputation, they are entangled in reciprocal conflict (*culebras*) with other sectors in the same *barrio*. Nevertheless, many people, like Ramos, who associated with two groups, identified more with the general figure of *el malandro*.

My observations suggest that these groups are not necessarily internally cohesive, as Pablo's (17) case demonstrated in Chapter 6. He did not trust many of the other people in his gang group, which convened in a different sector of Catia. I wandered around there, but interviewed him in his house and did not talk to any of the other members. In all, these groups were not hierarchically organised, exclusive, or clearly delineated units. Each of the observed networks involved a complex tangle of relationships, centred around a street corner, square or house, from where drugs were sold and people congregated in variable numbers. People of all ages and constellations would join and share an evening beer. This always included people that did not get involved in illegal activities, even police officers, as was the case on *calle Real*, where Hector (26), Azul's twin brother joined in too.

### **7.2.2 Relationships to others – community and other gang groups**

Malandros thus have plenty of relationships outside of the group that they most obviously associate with. They are not just malandros, but brothers, lovers, sons, baseball fanatics, neighbours and fathers.

All boys had longstanding contacts, often family members, within the sector they associated in, allowing them to find out quickly if any trouble is stirring. Nevertheless, Antonio (45), an ex-malandro, took time and effort in berating these 'boys of today', looking back melancholically over his own glory days in the 90s. When he was in business he would listen to survivors, and his gang would invest in the community. His group had built the basketball court on the street and now it was just all left to waste. I did observe these boys in their community shepherd role – carrying shopping bags for the elderly, reprimanding children, but their relationship with the community seemed indeed fragile. Many people quickly walked passed, uttering a disapproving 'hola', hello. Chapter 5 explored the tenuous symbiosis between malandros and their communities. Residents commonly turn a blind eye to what their neighbours' sons get up to. Many tolerate rather than engage with them, salute them but do not talk to them. It is better to keep them at arms' length than cause problems or expose the neighbourhood to other malandros.

The gangs are structured into higher order patterns of illicit networks by violence (the culebras) and markets for drugs and stolen goods. These structures evolve but remain relatively stable as individuals come and go, and even the crimes they commit are adapted to what is most profitable and least risky at a particular point in time. Manuel for instance had learned from the guy before where to obtain drugs, and which sectors best to avoid.

All groups had minor drug businesses, supplying the local area. Manuel and Ramos took me to visit the sites where they buy their drugs, large quantities are transacted and rifles more openly carried. One was an apartment in one of the big housing blocks in the west, another a semi-abandoned site in between two sectors of a barrio. Even in these places, people hung around that were labelled 'sano', decent, they had nothing to do with any illicit activities and were welcomed, like me, as long as they did not cause problems.

All boys have malandro friends across barrio boundaries. Manuel made friends with a malandro from across the hill that had stolen his motorbike. As he negotiated getting the bike back, he

realised this connection was advantageous to him and they had remained friends for years. Ramos also maintained contacts in his new sector. Relationships are formed through associates, encounters, and importantly, prison. These connections allow for the flow and diffusion of ideas, expectations and behaviours.

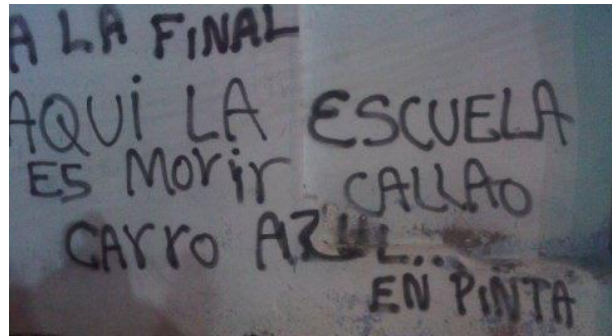
Malandros are indeed structurally equivalent, they occupy similar positions without a clear hierarchy, facilitating the spread of behaviour (Fagan et al., 2007). These groups can be seen as Zaluar (2001) conceived them in Brazil, as 'horizontal reciprocity networks' of structurally equivalent youth between whom drugs, but also violence and stories about this violence, are exchanged. These groups are not bound by an overarching criminal organisation that groups all the gangs of a barrio. Apart from prison, profits are not collected centrally or for group purposes, but rather are used for personal gain. They are collections of individuals enacting the unwritten rules of el malandreo and 'la calle', the street.

The groups with whom violence (usually in the form of culebras) is exchanged are the more pressing relationships for these malandros. They had few obligations tying them up into the illicit drug structure, but the culebras restrict their mobility and entangle them in cycles of reciprocal violence, as we will explore in more detail below. All of these boys said that getting them off the streets would imply resolving their culebras. Many felt trapped, dependent on the barrio, or more accurately (given not everyone in the barrio supports them and their relationships span across barrios), their networks, for safety. When I took public transport with Ramos, he was continuously looking over his shoulder, reassuringly touching the gun under his belt. Manuel roamed free through the main roads of his barrio on his motorbike, but would not dream of going into adjoining alleyways.

Focussing on el malandreo as an institution allows for incorporating each of these different shapes and forms as local expressions of more general scripts. It absolves us from looking for explanatory potential in single group structures, but urges us to look for it in the way they are intertwined. The following sections will look, first, at the construction of masculine identities in the barrio and, second, the construction of shared meanings and rules in interaction between malandros. Where inequalities go some way in explaining the meaning of el malandreo to boys in the barrio, we need to look at violent interactions to understand violence between them. It will be argued that this violence has further legitimised it as a fully-fledged street institution.

### 7.3 Cops and robbers; the making of men in the barrio

Picture 7-4 Mural painting in Cumaná (source: Facebook)



*In the end, going to school here is about dying in silence  
El Carro Azul*

This section engages with theories that look at the construction of masculine identities. I have already touched upon these perspectives in Chapter 5 (p.129), showing that people in the barrio have little access to formal opportunities in their networks, which also displayed some marked gender roles. Although women often rule the household, security provision (financial as well as physical) is still a male task. A man has to ‘have balls’, pay the bills, and protect the family. Men thus carry heavy responsibility in the informal and insecure surroundings of the barrio.

Vigil (1988) explores in detail the identity processes that influence joining a gang during adolescence. He calls it a time that ‘involves maximizing the distance between feared (what a person would not like to be) and real (what a person believes he is) identities and minimizing the gap between ideal (what a person would like to be) and real selves’ (p.425). Vigil argues that the masculine, tough gang provides distancing from the feminine, weak self.

These issues are reflected in my observations. Many young people want to be ‘special’, ‘to be someone’. That someone was often opposed to what they grew up in, different from the blandness and desolation of the barrio and many of its residents (their feared identities). They want to get ahead, like Hector (26), Azul’s twin brother, himself a policeman. They had already lost their older brother to violence a decade ago. Overlooking the dirty, rubbish-lined Calle Real, where they spent the latter part of their young adult lives, I asked him why he had not started selling drugs like his brother:

I used the people in the street as a mirror – I decided I didn’t want to be that way. I experimented with drugs too when I was younger, but I knew that if I continued that way I would end up dead, or in prison. I wanted to advance, have a better life, be an important person, have a family.

Semi-structured interview, Hector (policeman), Catia

Many men almost desperately wanted me to acknowledge how special they were, how different they were from their environments, convincing themselves thereof and opposing their real identities to the feared identity of not being anyone, 'just one of the million'. A 42-year-old malandro in Cumaná, who described himself as a 'fighter not a pistolero', eagerly started telling me his life story. He was under the stubborn impression I had come to write a book about his life. Wiping cocaine off his nose, he told me:

Delinquency isn't what people make it. There are many people here who just stay in their houses, they don't rob, don't do nothing, right? But who's going to write a book about their lives huh?

Unstructured interview, malandro, Cumaná

Barrio men, often emasculated through circumstance and an abundance of female role models (feared identity), thus resort to hyper-masculine tough identities: policeman, army officer or malandro. Identities that clearly reflect their masculinity. Additional kudos comes with carrying a gun. Young men (and women) are attracted to those professions and identities that instil them with power over life, and ultimately, respect.

On a more practical level illegal activities provide them with 'easy' money and a relatively good life – they can dress well, buy motorbikes, attend baseball games, party in trendy discothèques, consume weed (many do not touch the hard drugs they sell, or have a more leisurely habit) and, they get the attractive girls. A former malandro was told upon entering prison the first time;

First time hey? Listen up, do you like the ladies? The only good thing, [about el malandreo] the only good thing, is that you'll have women fighting over you.

Unstructured interview, ex-malandro, Catia

Manuel's girlfriend asked why she chooses to be with him says it this way;

At least for me, what can I say... respect? That they respect him. Everyone just has an incredible respect for Manuel. (...) I like feeling important, to put it crudely. (...) Being with any regular guy, I'd just feel normal.

Unstructured interview, female resident, Catia

Chapter 6 showed that looking for individual motivations is difficult when it comes to violence, they may never adequately explain why people join gangs either. Many malandros do not fit the stereotype of poor and deprived offenders. Many of them have been to school, unlike many poor. They had other opportunities too. Carlos repeats what I heard from several boys when I asked him whether it was a lack of jobs that had gotten him involved:

A lack of jobs, no. I knew how to work, I knew. But laziness... It was just easy.

Semi-structured interview, Carlos (prisoner), Cumaná

Young boys join gangs partly because they are there and they wind up experimenting with its offerings, as new social and sexual identities are contemplated in adolescence. In the absence of more formal institutions and masculine role models, street institutions do the socialisation.

Antonio (45) puts it quite well:

My mum was always telling me, 'don't go down this street, just don't. Play here, but not there'. So I became really curious. It's curiosity. As a boy of 13, 12... I wanted to know, so I went and saw them. Smoking. One time I heard a gunshot. One of the big boys took out a gun. Boom. He shot it in the air. I stood there, looking at the pistol. The guy had fame, he had money, you know... He's dead today... I was curious about the street, but never about doing anything like that... Never. But as you're in the street, in a particular spot, you think the street belongs to you. And you need to make sure the street is respected. Otherwise you shouldn't be there. Those higher up come and tell you – 'what are you doing here? This is a bad life. The police come here and shoot you, because they'll think you're a malandro. It's better you leave'... If you insist and stay there, well... They've told you. Now you need to assume your responsibility... After a while you start doing everything on the street – breakfast, lunch, dinner. You get the money somewhere ... Until you start doing things that don't, eh... Robberies... You get some nice shoes, you dress well...

Semi-structured interview, Antonio (ex-malandro), Catia

Young men growing up in the barrio today are indiscriminately confronted with an easy approach to money, status and relative security. Death lurks behind the corner either way. Studies that look at individual motivations for young people joining gangs are then as relevant as looking at how and why people take up smoking, or football. Just as only a few become addicted smokers, or international football players, only a small number of young boys in the barrio end up identifying with el malandreo. Mario (38) recalls how malandros were just there, like many boys that never got involved, he hung out with them on the street corner:

Yes I hung out with them but I never had a gun or anything. I got back from work and started drinking with them, it's like, how to explain... it's a street corner where, there's a bakery, the school is there, there's a street, you see...

Semi-structured interview, Mario, Catia

Ultimately, starting out with a gang is, as Antonio says:

It's a fashion. Just like lighting a cigarette, or having a beer (...) It's in the atmosphere.

Semi-structured interview, Antonio (ex-malandro), Catia

What is much more puzzling is how these young boys get caught in its nets, and why and how they start killing others, with detrimental effects on their own lives. Chapter 6 argued that a life of violence may generate more deprivation than it solves. Malandros can often feel trapped, wanting to escape their culebras, but once they have engaged in them it becomes difficult to do

so. Many of them are prisoners of fear, in networks where death and killing are indeed the norm rather than the exception. Death to them is routine.

[Respondent draws a hypothetical line between 'good' and 'bad' on my notebook] Those that are here [on the 'good' side] all are alive. All of them, Raul, Jose, Carlos, Ali. My generation, all of them have wives, kids. When I moved from here [good side] to there [bad side], to another 'ambiente' (...) I'm the lone survivor. The others, no. All of them are dead! (...) They perished in a war. Dead. It's a war. Of those that survived, of all the ones I knew, enemies as well as allies, only about 10 remain.

Unstructured interview, ex-malandro, Catia

Similarly, Los Lobos in Cumaná, took me through the photographs of their past, kept alive in a drawer with a 9mm gun. They pointed out the dead amongst the smiling faces, virile young men, often posing with children, working out, or boasting in groups of 10 to 15 peers. Most of them, too, had died 'in combat'.

It is relatively easy to understand that el malandreo offers them respect and existential meaning, this does not necessarily explain why they use so much violence. In the next section we will explore the rules and meanings of el malandreo, suggesting violence itself is a major factor in the continued attractions of el malandreo. Once young boys engage in a culebra, as I will explore below, it becomes difficult to find formal jobs and they find protection in the gang network. El malandreo maybe more than anything gives people control over their life, they believe that, as long as they follow the rules described below, they should be fine. Other men have less control – if they do not explicitly choose to be part of the game, they may get drawn in by chance, shot by stray bullets or mistaken identities. Masculinities are constructed in an ecology of danger.

These findings resonate with many of the issues identified by researchers in a myriad of other countries (see Chapter 2). El malandreo competes with other informal and more conventional identities in Venezuela's barrios for young people's souls; providing belonging, respect and livelihood. Where achieving masculine status and respect may be reasons for joining a gang, they do not necessarily explain the violence these people use. To understand why malandros are so particularly violent, we need to look at the beliefs and values el malandreo portrays, and how these influence behaviour.

#### **7.4 Myths and realities of el malandreo**

The previous section showed that el malandreo offers individuals livelihood and respect. Chapter 5 already explored how, through the threat of violence, it also provides informal social control in the barrio, particularly against malandros from other barrios. To fully understand its



violence we need to look at the rules it proscribes for people that identify with it, and how these are filled in in interaction. This section shows that repeated interactions have generated shared meanings, ‘myths’ about callous, heavily armed malandros that kill for fun rather than reason, as well as a set of rules that condemns this type of gratuitous violence. These myths are assigned to other gangs, making violence against them both legitimate and immediately necessary. The culebra is driven by the contagion of fear and gun behaviours more than any infraction of the rules. Each killing generates new feuds, stringing ever more people together in a deadly cast. This violence itself continuously reinforces an imaginary of random violence and the moral superiority of the malandro, whom claims to protect the barrio from it. In all, el malandreo is a complex governance structure. An end to its violence will necessarily need to involve dealing with these structures, perhaps even co-opting them in a movement for change.

#### 7.4.1 Imaginaries of the streets; the code and characters of el malandreo

*Menor Petare es una prisión  
Donde el malandreo es... Una Religión*

*Boy Petare is a prison  
Where el malandreo is... A religion*

*Guerrilla Seca.*

**Picture 7-5 Los Santos Malandros (Caracas, 2012)**



Malandros today are an inherent part of the contradictions of life in the barrio, as revered as they are despised. They are culturally embedded to the extent that they have their own perceived language, music, saints, YouTube series, dress style<sup>5</sup> and alleged facial features – ‘cara

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<sup>5</sup> I certainly did not acquire a sixth sense for picking out malandros, but many others seemed to be able to do so. Malandros have the money to dress better than others, have the newest sneakers etc.

de malandro'<sup>6</sup> (malandro face). The 'santos malandros', malandro saints (see Picture 7-5), are probably the most prevailing expression of this rich cultural heritage. They are invariably pictured with guns and other vices such as marihuana or alcohol. They were the original malandros, protectors of the barrio in true 'Robin Hood' style (Ferrándiz, 2004). Legend goes that they stole from the rich to give to the poor. Although the malandros I spoke to did not have any of these images and no longer claim to share their proceeds with the barrio, they continue to echo its ideals – protectors of the barrio and the working-class. Today, the barrio needs to be protected from within, from crazy kids ('Chiguieres', see below) that threaten it with their indiscriminate violence.

#### 7.4.1.1 An imaginary of random violence

*Ustedes dicen que nosotros incitamos a la violencia  
Y los violentos no somos nosotros, violenta es la calle*

*You say that we incite violence  
We're not the violent ones, the street is the violent one*

*El Prieto.*

Current-day malandreo revolves around an imaginary of random violence, an imaginary that is reproduced by new media like Youtube, Facebook and the lyrics of Gangsta Rap, and finds a quick following in the dense reciprocity networks of el malandreo. I call it an imaginary because it is questionable that these media and lyrics recount the everyday reality of the barrio. They depict the barrio as a place where death and violence are the day's daily bread. This is a partial reality that I personally never saw or experienced first-hand. It is indeed more real for malandros whom are entangled in chains of reciprocal violence, but still not daily, nor entirely random. As in other contexts, malandros play on this imaginary to put on a front of toughness, to generate fear and fend off danger from other gangs (Felson, 2006; Howell, 2007). Part of gang life is posturing, projecting a tough identity to prevent being killed. Facebook is a where gangs display their guns (see Picture 7-6) as well as confronting pictures of those killed (not shown here). This is a major boasting and deterrence strategy that shapes expectations and feeds the imaginary of random violence.

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<sup>6</sup> I am not suggesting malandros have different facial features. One of the boys I interviewed in hospital had been accidentally stabbed in his cheek whilst playing games with his friend. He cried because he was extremely worried his 'cara de malandro' would effectively scar him for life.

**Picture 7-6 Guns displayed on Facebook**

Influenced by this imaginary, malandros always thought others were more ferocious than them. In Cumaná malandros believe their counterparts in the capital are much more violent than them.

**What is the difference between the violence here [in Cumaná] and in Caracas?** There they don't respect you, they're pure criminals out there. They kill you for a pair of shoes. Here, they still respect you. (...) There they kill police officers, they don't do that here. It's much larger, bigger out there, Cumaná is still small. [inaudible] The thing is that here, the government [i.e. police] also respects delinquents. In Caracas the government come and kill you. Pa pa pa.

Group interview, Los Lobos, Cumaná

In Caracas, other sectors (e.g. El Valle, Petare) are where the real violence is. Other gangs are 'el mas malo', worse than them. A malandro at a drug transaction site repeats what they told me over and over:

Children of 13 are killing people. You say 'Oi, whats wrong with you?' they kill you. For a bad look, they kill you. So many things. Delinquency is very advanced.

Unstructured interview, malandro, Catia

Whereas these stories paint a picture of more or less random violence, the rules of el malandreo explicitly condemn this type of violence. The malandro protects the barrio from indiscriminate violence through his 'justified' violence. There is an important contradiction here that is resolved through projecting these types of behaviours onto others, immediately justifying violence against them. The pictures on Facebook reflect these justifications, those killed were 'sapos' (snitches, see below). The arms are needed to deal with violent street realities.

Violence is part and parcel of el malandreo, though it is bound by rules. A true malandro does not kill innocent people. Violence is reserved for people that deserve it one way or another. People that have 'comido la luz', literally 'eaten their light'. This refers to traffic lights, they have skipped a red light, and can be called to justice. People that deserve respect, such as good students, caring mothers, hardworking fathers, the elderly, should be left alone. Manuel makes

a distinction between the death of his brother and that of his friend Pablito. Pablito was a good boy, and those that killed him 'deserved' to die too.

It hurt me too, but that of Pablito hurt me more, because that of my brother was you know, I knew it would happen one day or another because he always looked for problems, and when you know this mentally... at least when that day comes it hurts, but I knew he was going to die sooner or later. Pablito on the other hand... Pablito was a boy who didn't drink, didn't smoke. He went to university, worked for university... didn't swear, a very good boy, easy... what's more he always advised me, not to get involved in problems

**Going back to your brother, did you avenge his death?**

No. That of Pablito, yes I did.

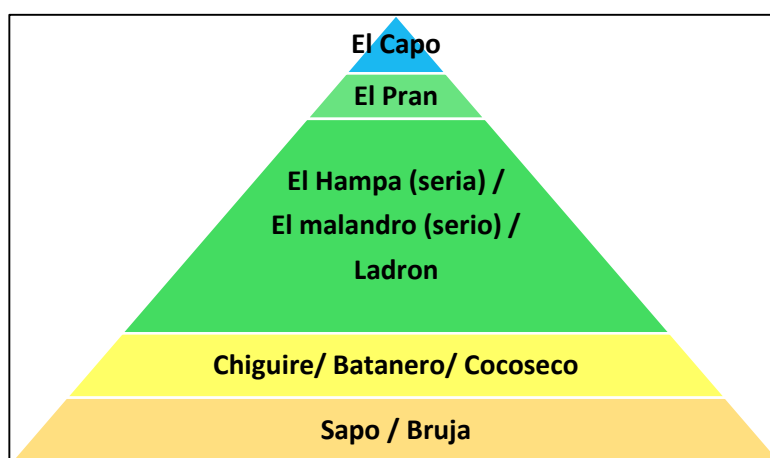
Semi-structured interview, Manuel (malandro), Catia

Random and indiscriminate violence is not appreciated. It endangers the gang group by raking up problems, and the profession as a whole by eroding sympathy within the barrio. Vigil (2006) sees crazy people ('locos') in the gang as essential for demonstrating toughness. In Venezuela these locos are a curse more than a blessing. They do set the standard, but it is a dishonourable standard projected onto others. Stories abound of the evil other, people killing for a 'look', 'a pair of shoes', or even for 'fun'. These stories do have some basis in particular real events, but through urban legend and Gangsta Rap, these events accrue mythical proportions that shape malandros' cognitions, and ultimately their behaviour. The hierarchy of el malandreo projects these behaviours on crazy kids that are not worthy of the name malandro.

#### 7.4.1.2 The hierarchy of el malandreo

Central to the imaginary of el malandreo is a code of behaviour that is inherently linked to a status hierarchy as shown in Figure 7-1.

**Figure 7-1. The internal hierarchy of el Malandreo**



It is a loose hierarchy, not based on actual organisational structures, but the accumulation of respect. 'El Capo' is the 'invisible delinquent' (Bolívar et al., 2012), the person that controls the drug trade and has connections with law enforcement. In Cumaná he had two visible faces, Cheo Proyectil<sup>7</sup> and Manuel Lanza; leaders of Carro Azul and Carro Paisa/El Tren, opposing groups that are said to rule the streets<sup>8</sup>. In Caracas, it was more difficult to put a face on the top of the hierarchy, the city isn't ruled by just a few well-known gangs. Nevertheless, malandros told stories of other barrios where these people ruled indeed. It is difficult to say whether these stories were part of the imaginary whereby other gangs are seen as *el mas malo*. It is certain that the malandros I spoke to were not tied to a capo, but they spoke respectfully of these figures.

The 'pran' is an equivalent figure, but he rules from prison. He controls a pavilion (a section of the prison), and collects a 'causa', a weekly protection payment of around 50 bolivars from all prisoners on his ward, that allows him to buy guns, drugs, and also prison guards. Prans are also frequently linked to illegal activities on the outside, such as kidnapping. These people have made it within *el malandreo*, they are said to set the rules. A Facebook message from a self-proclaimed pran that was eagerly reproduced by a malandro reflects a number of important rules:

Street buddies... This is the serious underworld speaking from prison. This is for those minors who are out there robbing motorbikes. I speak clearly and in name of the people. Leave your 'chiguireo' because if you end up in prison for motorcycle robbery, you're looking at a minimum of 50 shots in the face... remember that us serious people we get around by motorbike too, just like family fathers who're out there making a living on their motorbikes... Let it be clear yeah... If you're looking for money do it were it is to be found, not robbing the same people that see us grow up in the barrio and are basically the same as us, looking for money to survive... Spread the word until it reaches the pigeons that go around robbing motorbikes... Yours truly, the pran of Yare I.

Facebook post, shared through account of one of my contacts on Calle Real

Prison is where malandros find their fate if they have made too much trouble on the streets. The prospect of ending up in prison establishes social control over malandros, ironically not through the application of formal social control (imprisonment) as such, but through the much more frightening rules of *el malandreo*. A member of Los Lobos says:

They'll pay for everything. They [in prison] know everything. What happens here is that they behave badly on the streets, but they don't know one day they'll be imprisoned and that'll be it...

Group interview, Los Lobos, Cumaná

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<sup>7</sup> I have subsequently learned that he was killed soon after I finished my fieldwork.

<sup>8</sup> Although it is doubtful there is an actual top-down hierarchy, as explained in 7.2

Picture 7-7 Mural painting of a malandro (Source: Facebook)



\* 'P.H.S. (Pura Hampa Seria) – I don't believe in anyone – Gossips, frogs and witches need not apply'

The vast middle of this hierarchy is made up of delinquents of various assignations, commonly distinguished by their type of activity. El hampa, the underworld, refers to illegal activity more than a particular connection to the barrio, which is the malandro's habitat. El hampa engages more in 'outdoor' activities; he robs (the rich, of course). Some referred to these people as 'ladrones', robbers, although this word sometimes has a negative connotation too. The boys on Calle Real put it this way when I asked them what it meant to be a malandro:

Mauro: Not letting yourself be fucked with. Selling drugs. Killing, fucking around. Hanging around the street.

Ramos: Ladrones rob to get money, they're quieter. Malandros belong to the barrio, they drink, joke around.

Group interview, Calle Real, Catia

In all, there is no clear status difference between el hampa, malandros and ladrones, although there is more organisation and connections instilled in the word hampa. They associate in structurally equivalent, but opposing groups of youth that all identify with el malandreo. Seemingly oblivious to the shared identity that ties them together, they are entangled in a reciprocal conflict network sustained by myths and culebras.

'Serio', serious, is a commonly used adjective, used to illustrate that someone means business. It distinguishes the in-group within this layer of equivalent groups, and sets it apart from 'chiguire' that mess things up for the serious malandro. 'Chiguire' (the Venezuelan word for the capybara - the world's largest rodent), or 'cocosecos', empty headed people (literally 'dry coconuts'), are looked down upon. They are inexperienced crazy kids that are often seen to take too many drugs and kill for the sake of it. 'Bataneros' (no translation) are equally despicable,

they rob their own people. They are 'sin vergüenza', have no morals. They are a danger for the gang, and the community. The terms 'sapo', frog, 'paja', snitch, and 'bruja', witch, are reserved for the lowest of the low; people that betray their friends, e.g. by talking to the police.

The distinction between the middle and bottom layers is important, but ambiguous. Malandros project bottom behaviours onto others that themselves identify as malandros too. None of the people I spoke to admitted to having killed for a pair of shoes, or enjoying violence, they project this behaviour onto chiguire. They kill for 'valid' reasons, as the code proscribes. Each malandro thinks the same, justifying their own violence. We will see in the next section that the dynamics of the culebra facilitate these processes, in the exchange of violence these myths acquire real dimensions. They generate an ecology of danger where death is routine and safety is found in the in-group.

In all, God remains the ultimate judge in the barrio. Most malandros believe in God, and that they are doing right by him. This may be a way of coping with the extreme existential insecurity they face on a daily basis. They do not, in their own minds, disobey his rule of 'Thou shalt not kill'. Rather, they extend it with a footnote, an exception, for their enemies, the evil other. True malandros only kill 'bad' people. Their 'good' violence is always reactionary – self-defence, it was him or me, or a proportionate response to an infraction of unwritten rules. This rather perversely makes them God's representatives on earth, protectors of the barrio. In absence of formal social control, the malandro is like an elite force. The rules of el malandreo are above, and more urgent, than the law. They are enforced by el malandreo itself, on the streets and in prison.

El hampa, more than the government [i.e. police]... El hampa is not braindead when it comes to killing people, when they kill someone here it's because he did something, went around blaming, killing people and stuff (...) It doesn't fuck about (...)

Group interview, Calle Bolívar, Catia

#### 7.4.2 The dynamics of 'la culebra'; the contagion of fear and retaliatory gun violence

*Gang members do not kill because they are poor, black, or young or live in a socially disadvantaged neighborhood. They kill because they live in a structured set of social relations in which violence works its way through a series of connected individuals.*

*(Papachristos, 2009, p.75)*

Culebras have a wide range of obvious causes, most frequently a public challenge to masculine identity, a display of disrespect. 'A monster', as someone described it, 'with a thousand heads – drugs, women, music, money, alcohol, movies...'. This instance of disrespect can be either a personal or a group insult. It is difficult to say when malandros act individually or in the name of their sector. As Bolivar (2012) showed in el Guarataro, many culebras have acquired a territorial dimension, they are tied to sectors in which different gang groups convene. Nevertheless, that this conflict, whether between sectors or individual malandros, takes a lethal form in Venezuela has more to do with the endogenous dynamics of violence itself, than disempowering social structures or evermore gratuitous offenders. It is the embedding in chains of lethal violence, more than disrespect or infractions of the code that make it so deadly.

It is difficult to appreciate where a particular culebra starts or ends. Gang groups and individual malandros are often entangled in culebras that go back months or even years; one killing generated a culebra, which was resolved by another killing, which generated more culebras etc. They never end, as a malandro on Calle Real says:

When they disrespect you it's final, you have to... till the end. Time is both your friend and your worst enemy. The culebra sticks around. The people you kill have family. It takes a generation and still... these things don't pass, they may pass [temporarily] but more like clouds above your head, the culebra stays around.

Unstructured interview, malandro, Catia

He touches on the multiplier effect of a culebra, acting upon a culebra generates a string of new culebras, 'dolientes' (mourners) as they are called. This refers to people that are affected by a certain death, and instant candidates to avenge this death. Shooting someone exposes a whole line of potential enemies. Los lobos looked back on the period before they had to put down their arms:

Respondent 1: And so it's not that this guy didn't want to pay, he wanted to kill a guy that was from another gang, but it was already on. They caught him, killed him and there it took off like a rocket. Cumaná exploded haha...

**How long ago?**

This is like 4 years ago, how long ago did he die? Respondent 2: Like 4, 5 years ago?



**So that's the cause of so many homicides?**

R1: Yep, from there on we started pa pa pa pa killing people, killing everywhere. R2: A massive war, many people with a whole lot of people more. R1: ...After that they killed the brother of another mate, yet another boy, and more 'dolientes'... And that was that, 2, 3 deaths a day. 4 even.

Group interview, prison, Cumaná

This does indeed seem to correspond with a spike in homicide rates in Cumaná in 2007-2008, around 4-5 years before fieldwork (see Figure 4-3 on p.85). A homicide in one sector thus often triggers a series of revenge acts in adjoining sectors. This area becomes 'candela', scorching. In what follows I explore how violence multiplies through the contagion of fear and gun behaviours, generating an 'ecology of danger' (Fagan et al., 2007) in which violence becomes a basic survival mechanism.

**7.4.2.1 The contagion of fear and activation of network boundaries**

These dolientes are of prime concern to malandros, they are an ever-present threat. A malandro has to be 'activo', 'pendiente', proactive and ready, always on guard. Mateo (29) has just been injured in a shooting that killed his cousin. He was not the instigator on this occasion, but he knows the people that killed his cousin will be expecting him to retaliate. He puts it this way:

I'm not going to feel at ease, feel comfortable until I see them all dead. Why? Because Caracas isn't big (...) Caracas is small (...) everyone knows everyone. I'll live with the fear that I'll be selling my gear and run into one or other of them, because I know what can happen (...) It has happened before, I ran into these types, and they saluted me out of fear, they don't usually, in the center they salute because if I'm carrying anything at that time, they know (...) I shouldn't say the words...

Semi-structured interview, Mateo (ex-malandro), Catia

Amongst this fear, malandros find safety in their network. A few streets or sectors where everyone is known, and life (like death) is controllable, become the only place to hide.

This is also where group processes start to work. First of all, by activating the network. The battle cry when culebras are aroused is 'activense', literally 'activate'. Los Lobos quickly find out when their culebras are in the area:

R1: [the culebras] are out there, on the streets ... R2: Out there. It's cat and mouse you know. R1: Robin (sic.) and Jerry. R2: You can be quiet, but one comes out, look. The telephone, he's here. Buddy, it's going to take off. You take your gun... boom, boom, boom. R1: You may be just standing around and suddenly they call. Your friend says look there's a culebra of yours there. You take a gun and go there... R2: Cause there's plenty of people... R1: By telephone, that's it. Communication.

Group interview, Los Lobos, Cumaná

Secondly, within the relative safety of this network, stories about the violent other spread quickly. The immoral behaviours described above are projected onto the out-group, generating expectations of this dangerous other (and ultimately legitimising the use of violence against them). Other gangs do not play by the rules. A conversation with Manuel and some others at the drug transaction site shows how this type of story-telling, whereby the own group of friends is more valiant than others, further restricts them to places that are known:

**You think I'm stupid for going to these sectors right.**

R1: Yes. Manuel: Stupid no, crazy! R1: No, stupid. Stupid, because there are serious people like us who don't get women involved... Manuel: Others are really bad! ... R1: There are boys, because of drugs they don't know what they're doing... Suddenly they'll shoot you in the leg or something. R3: You're basically playing with your life.

**But you guys play with your lives much more than I do?**

Manuel: The thing is that we know, we know where we are. I'm not going to enter a zone I don't know.

Group interview, drug exchange, Catia

The situation on Cumaná's prison ward, where gang boundaries are strictly enforced, reflects these processes even more clearly. Locked up in their separate pavilions, they showed me pictures of prisoners (supposedly) in the other ward playing football with a chiguire's head. They told tales of pigs eating the remains of sapos. The lack of contact except through the exchange of violence reproduces these myths of the evil other that not only justify, but make reciprocal violence immediately necessary. The presence of guns in these cycles of retaliatory violence adds a lethal twist that quickly affects expectations and interactions.

#### **7.4.2.2 Reciprocity and the contagion of gun behaviours**

The malandro is bound by rules but these are continuously rewritten in violent interaction. The overarching norm in the culebra is reciprocity. Gabriel (24) says:

There is respect. I'll treat you how you treat me. If you don't respect my family, I won't respect yours. If you don't respect me, I don't respect you. If you draw a gun on me, I'll draw two on you, that's the code of today.

Semi-structured interview, Gabriel, Catia

As one person adopts (or is alleged to adopt) a mutation of the code, they redefine the rules for the next interaction. A malandro in Cumaná puts it this way:

You can't kill someone's family because you know... You'll pay with a family member as well. (...) inaudible (...) When something like that takes off it's very sad... they kill your mom, your dad. It's crazy.

Unstructured interview, malandro, Cumaná

Guns change the rules of the game, by introducing a much higher level of threat. Partly under influence of the imaginary described above, gangs engage in an arms race. Guns always existed

but were often considered cowardly in the past (Bolívar et al., 2012). How and when they became more commonly used to resolve *culebras*, or whether this was a rapidly spreading myth, is unclear, but the impact this belief has on future interactions is certain. A generalised expectation that guns will be used by the other side condones their pre-emptive use:

Today you can't fight anyone like that, with your fists, bats. No. today, these youngsters have lots of guts, we have to live with that, always on alert... ... Almost every weekend they kill someone in the *barrio*... Last night they killed someone

Semi-structured interview, Juan (prisoner), Cumaná

It becomes important for survival to shoot the other first, which may offer instant gratification, as a prisoner suggest below. Nevertheless, it reinitiates the process by generating more *culebras*.

First you feel happy, one less person who's going to kill me on the streets. And if he has money we take the debt. Pa pa. I killed this dog. Let's celebrate, smoke a little weed... Say you have 5 *culebras*, you kill one, tomorrow you have 20 *culebras*... They come looking for you... Before you know it, a whole *barrio* is looking to kill you.

Group interview, prison, Cumaná

This type of violence ultimately is 'self-help' (Black, 1993), social control in the absence of formal social control. It becomes a question of him or me, if he does not kill, the other will kill him.

I was there with him. [Hand on head like a pistol] that's where they start begging 'don't kill me please, I have a child, I know where the motorbike is, I'll get it to you' [shakes his head]

**It's too late?**

It's too late... You can't allow this. If you do, you're dead. It's you, or him. It's too late... Too late.

Unstructured interview, malandro, Catia

The *culebra* thus sets up an ecology of danger where *malandros* need to be continuously active, within a small world of trusted others, and kill before they are killed themselves. This type of violence is defined more by previous violence, fear and self-defence than it is by disrespect or intrusions of the code. Although it is justified post-fact by this code, they are evil, we are serious *malandros*. Nevertheless, much more than a demand for respect, it is a desire to stay alive.

**When do you use violence?** R1: Against the enemy. R2: The enemy.

**But you're killing people who are equal to you, why?** R2: Because they're *culebras*. R1: Because they're problems.

But they're equals? Enemies.

**They live doing the same?** Because if you don't kill them, they kill you, it's as simple as that. R2: You kill to survive.

Group interview, prison, Cumaná

Once one has engaged in a *culebra*, it is hard to get out. It becomes difficult to get a formal job, regular hours expose *malandros* to their *culebras*. Further, to be safe on the street, in absence

of formal social control, but knowledge of other gangs' arms, malandros need to buy guns and bullets. Formal, regular jobs do not pay enough and put them in more danger. Drugs, robberies and kidnappings then necessarily provide the money for arms and offer the additional advantage that they can be planned and executed from the relative safety of the barrio. Malandros that have engaged in a *culebra* soon get caught in a vicious cycle of different illegal activities sustaining each other from which only few escapes exist; moving away, death, or evangelicalism<sup>9</sup>.

The experience of Los Lobos in Cumaná shows relieving the *culebras* does indeed take the immediate pressure off, but it does not dissolve the complex governance structure of el malandreo. It was the truce between gangs in the barrio that managed to stop the killing between the gangs of a particular barrio. The gang members today had legal, but still irregular work on construction sites. They preferred this way of making honest money, but guns and drugs remain defining aspects of their lives. The meaning of the gang, and particularly their *culebras* with other barrios, remained unaltered. The mere calling of a truce does not solve years of posturing and scaremongering between different sectors. The guns are kept, just in case. Further, the law of the street has become superior to that of the government. In absence of formal social control, malandros still take up the responsibility to deal with defectors.

**But something's missing right – why does the killing go on?** Well because, eh... they continue to kill but they kill people for instance that eh 'se comen la luz' – jump a red light. They pacified right. I know what becomes me now, I'm a rehabilitated person... we know that at night the arms come out... this will never change. Before there were like 7 murders daily here, today no... a small death every once in a while, you know...

Group interview, Los Lobos, Cumaná

This section has shown that the horizontal reciprocity networks of el malandreo are sustained by myths and retaliatory violence. The violence generated by the dynamics of the *culebra* feeds back into an imaginary of random violence, continuously reinforcing the moral superiority of serious malandros that protect the barrio from this random violence. In this way, violence continuously legitimises the governance structures of el malandreo.

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<sup>9</sup> Smilde (2005) describes how identifying with the evangelical faith can protect malandros from their *culebras*, religious people should not be harmed.

## 7.5 Conclusion

*The moment the gangs start to consider that their words, their ideas, their projects can be respected as much as their arms or physical strength, we'll be making significant progress.*

*(Peddrazzini and Sanchez 1996, p.31)*

In conclusion, the informality of the barrio, the lack of links to the formal economy and state, has led to the emergence of an informal hierarchy of delinquency where wealth is obtained through illegal activities and status contested through violence. El malandreo is a noun that commonly reflects these activities – selling drugs and protecting the barrio, sometimes robbing, kidnapping, and often killing. It simultaneously fulfilled needs within the barrio, threatened by malandros from other barrios and unprotected by an arbitrary police force, as it did individual needs for respect and livelihood. It developed into a proper institution, with an internal hierarchy and proscribed rules. The sad –in this case– fact about institutions is that, having grown out of certain interactions, they resist change to these interactions, they are resilient (Scott, 2008). This way, el malandreo ends up recreating the difficult conditions that generated it. The dynamics of el malandreo reproduce a climate of fear that paradoxically sustains the need for it. Thus, even though many side effects do more harm than good to individuals as well as the community, the institution continues to fulfil needs. These young men are caught up in a deadly dynamic that offers very little protection in the grand scheme of things. Quite the opposite, it locks them in a seemingly never-ending spiral of violence.

Belonging to a gang seems to be related to a particular type of lethal violence, though it does not explain it (Howell and Decker, 1999). Most of the time gangs do not engage in violence. Not all gang members engage in violence either. Young people the world over hang around on street corners, talk about the opposite sex and consume alcohol and drugs. In this respect, the young protagonists of Venezuela's deadly violence do not differ substantially from other youngsters, most of the time. What sets them apart from others is that they carry guns, and, for a minority of their time, they rob, and kill. They maintain healthy or at least relatively normal relationships with family and boys that do not get involved. It is not even the violence per se, young men all over the world get into fights in an apparent effort to prove their burgeoning masculinity. Fighting is not necessarily deviant behaviour viewed through the lens of young men, whether urban, rural, rich, poor, black or white. Again it is the deadliness of the violence that takes centre stage here.

The violence takes this form because it is embedded in a chain of action and reaction where gang members have to respond proactively. Rather than seeing violence as embedded in abstract social structures or violent people, this chapter argues we should embed it in the interactions and relationships that reproduce it. Although this deadly violence does define the gang (see also Chapter 2 p.19), it does not define its members, who use violence only when their gang identity provokes it. Violence is not a characteristic of people, but of interactions. Deadly gun violence in Venezuela spreads through contagion, adaptation of certain behaviours in close-knit interaction groups, rather than e.g. being provoked by deprivation, anger, or uninhibited by a lack of self-control. This violence is not linearly related to aggregate social indicators nor the sum of isolated events, it follows a rollercoaster pattern (Fagan et al., 2007).

**In the past five years, has violence in this barrio gone up, down or stayed the same?**

R1: Here violence goes up and down again... It augments, diminishes, augments, diminishes, augments, diminishes... Like the seasons... R2: There can be a lot of murders and suddenly it goes all quiet. Another time it heats up again (...) When the people that hang around here go about looking for problems elsewhere.'

Group interview, local residents, Catia

That similar processes seem to apply to gang violence in a context as different as Venezuela is perhaps the most important finding of this chapter, with several implications for theory, policy and practice. It renders the traditional juxtaposition of motivational and control theories of violence more or less irrelevant, neither motivations nor controls are as important in regenerating gang violence as is the prior presence of violence itself. The dynamics of gang gun violence are endogenous, not exogenous.

Of course, the continued absence of formal social control mechanisms is an important factor in the spread of this violence. However, this is a continued absence. Only the endogenous feedback mechanisms of violence itself explain the patterns found in Chapter 3, with homicide rates gradually spreading across the country and ebbing and flowing.

Seeing el malandreo as an institution with a varied following of complex and capable individuals organised into networks offers hope for transformation, and potential for turning these governance structures towards constructive goals, rather than destructive ones (Hagedorn, 2008). The first step towards this goal will need to be an appraisal and resolution of institutionalised violence between different factions. Part of the answer may lie in finally accepting gang members as intelligent and capable actors, and co-opting their networks in a movement for change. None of the people I interviewed enjoyed the violence. Some were able

to justify it better than others, but many were fearful and felt trapped. Depressingly, none saw an immediate end to the violence.

## CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

### 8.1 Introduction

This chapter reflects on the findings of this thesis. It makes a case for a relational understanding of violence, which sees it in the context of interactions and relationships, and also incorporates this violence itself as an independent variable that continuously reproduces the boundaries of inequality and the conditions in which this violence can take hold. This chapter also explores this thesis' implications for future research and policy, and acknowledges its limitations.

### 8.2 Summary of findings

This thesis explored the connections between inequality and violence in Venezuela. Chapter 1 showed that traditional indicators suggest these concepts are not related in Venezuela, justifying a focus on exploring some lower-level mechanisms that might be responsible for correlations that are often found in different contexts. Chapter 2 looked at the literature that has evaluated these connections and showed that many theories do not assume direct connections between inequality and violence. They often assume people's relationships mediate and mitigate these connections, validating a focus on these relationships. Chapter 3 gave a brief historical overview of Venezuela's divided worlds, homicide rates and recent changes therein, arguing that aggregate indicators tell us very little of the mechanisms that are often seen to connect inequality and violence. Chapter 4 described the methods that were used for exploring people's interactions and relationships, explaining in detail the strategies that were used to approach violent offenders and the semi-structured instrument that captured the relationships embedded in people's personal networks.

The findings were presented and discussed in Chapters 5 to 7. Chapter 5 explored how barrio residents' personal networks reflect their opportunities, expectations and informal social control mechanisms, conditions that are often seen to be conducive to differential levels of violence. Anomie or strain, a discrepancy between people's opportunities and expectations, is often said to generate motivations for violence, whereas informal social control mechanisms are often seen to be able to mitigate these motivations. It showed that barrio residents have little access to waged and formal opportunities in their networks, and also experience strain, although not necessarily in comparison to their interaction groups. It found little evidence that barrio residents' relationships or neighbourhoods lack informal social control mechanisms. Chapter 6 explored the connections between inequality and violence at the micro-level, relating some



measures and instances of violence to motivations and controls embedded in people's personal networks. It suggested that looking at the overall structure of relationships in which these individuals are embedded might be more productive in understanding the deadly gun violence that is the interest of this thesis. Chapter 7 applied a relational framework to the meanings and violence of *el malandreo*. It showed how violence between *malandros*, people that identify with *el malandreo*, generates an imaginary of random violence that continuously reproduces the need for further violence and the meanings of *el malandreo* itself.

Overall, this thesis argues the type of deadly violence that affects Venezuela is not explained very well by traditional perspectives that assume inequality motivates people to use violence, or that their relationships can mitigate these motivations. There is evidence that people in the *barrio* may be motivated by a discrepancy between their opportunities and expectations, but it is difficult to relate this to micro-level measures of violence. The findings show particularly little support for social disorganisation and control perspectives that suggest strong relationships can mitigate an effect of inequality through providing informal social control. Instead, looking at people's actual relationships, rather than their effects on community cohesion and informal social control, suggests strong relationships may generate violence, particularly where formal social control is absent. The absence of formal social control is much more detrimental than any absence of community cohesion and has allowed for the institutionalisation of *el malandreo* as a form of informal social control in the *barrio*. More relational interpretations that look at how identities, and violence itself, attain meaning offer better tools for understanding the deadly violence that affects Venezuela. Only an understanding of the actual relationships through which violence flows offers a fully plausible account of how this violence gained such proportions. Unequal access to formal opportunities and formal social control are the distal causes of Venezuela's violence, whereas its proximate cause is to be found in this violence itself.

In the next section, I discuss these findings in more detail, making the case for a relational understanding of violence that sees it as an expression of people's interactions and relationships, as well as an important independent variable that generates the conditions for future violence.

### **8.3 Discussion**

In this section I discuss in more detail the main findings of this thesis, steering towards a relational understanding of violence that also incorporates this violence as an important independent variable.

### **8.3.1 Towards a relational understanding of violence**

This thesis argues that, in order to understand the deadly violence that affects Venezuela, we need to look at the interactions and relationships that produce it, rather than seeing it as an attribute of people or their communities. Suggestions of a Venezuelan paradox –that income inequality is not related to homicidal violence in the Venezuelan context– are given by a continued focus on violent people as rational-actors. In this view, the absence of correlations between income inequality and homicide rates is interpreted as suggesting that people have not benefited from recent changes in inequality and remain motivated to use violence, or that the institutions that can keep people from violence were undermined. This thesis shows that in looking at people’s interactions and relationships, a distinct perspective on the connections between inequality and violence emerges. Looking at these interactions and relationships shows how *el malandreo* attains meaning in the dense and informal spaces of the *barrio*, and how violence itself spreads through interactions in its horizontal reciprocity networks, where this type of violence is an unparalleled form of social control. Historical inequalities are important in understanding this violence, but they need to be seen in the context of social interactions, and particularly the continued, rather than sudden, absence of formal social control agencies. The study thus contains a critique of traditional criminological thinking, which too often remains stuck in a juxtaposition of external motivations versus internal controls in the aetiology of violence. It needs to move beyond seeing violence as an attribute of the actors involved, by seeing it in the context of their interactions and relationships.

Social disorganisation and control perspectives in particular embed violence in communities and people that lack informal social controls, without critically reflecting on the relationships that sustain these communities or the interactions in which people use violence. Social disorganisation perspectives suggest that community cohesion can mitigate the effects of inequality, arguing that where communities get together to implement informal social control, violence can be contained. This appears to be exactly what has happened in Venezuela, communities, or certain members of these communities, have started taking responsibility for informal social control, through violence, with devastating consequences. These perspectives ignore the historical absence of formal social control, which makes violence itself a form of informal social control. They have provided invaluable insights on differential levels of violence in communities, but should consider more carefully the effects of people’s actual relationships on informal social control, rather than looking for evidence of informal social control in community cohesion. A focus on people’s actual relationships, aided by the frameworks of

governance and self-help, shows how violent interactions and identities also provide social control and even institutional guidance where formal social control is absent or questioned.

Anomie and strain perspectives, which look at how a discrepancy between structural opportunities and cultural aspirations generates motivations for violence, similarly often ignore the importance of formal social control institutions. Institutional anomie perspectives have made progress in this regard, through bringing in a focus on conventional institutions. Nevertheless, they are similar to social disorganisation perspectives in suggesting that conventional institutions such as family and religion can keep people from acting on violent motivations. They continue to focus on violent people over and above their interactions and support a normative view of the moral superiority of conventional institutions. The absence of formal social control institutions needs to be conceptualised much more carefully. The frames of legal cynicism perspectives offer better tools here, through actually conceptualising the illegitimacy of formal social control institutions in the aetiology of violence. This thesis argues that, at least in Venezuela, the absence of formal social control has more dramatic effects on violence than any absence of family or religious values and conventional institutions.

Anomie and strain perspectives are valuable in conceptualising the importance of unequal opportunity structures. Nevertheless, they focus too often on how a lack of opportunities generates individual motivations, without conceptualising the relationships that sustain inequality. An account of inequality is necessary, it has dramatic effects on the daily realities of the poor, but this does not necessarily make them violent. Especially in the unequal structure of Venezuela, many people feel strained, nevertheless rarely resort to violence. Further, people do not necessarily feel strained in comparison to their significant others. This thesis questioned these perspectives' reliance on abstract boundaries to infer motivations, as people do not necessarily compare themselves to everyone else within abstract boundaries. Nevertheless, it showed that even a focus on the concrete boundaries of people's interaction networks and lower-level differences between people might not be as important in understanding violence as the uncertainties and informalities that tie them together. The violence in Venezuela is a violence between relative equals that is itself better explained by the dynamics of interactions than it is by material differences in opportunities. Inequalities in and of themselves no longer explain this violence, although they go some way in explaining the meaning of violent identities. A lack of formal opportunities and formal social control makes violent identities inherently attractive, but they do not make people kill each other. We need to make a distinction between these violent identities and violence itself. Where a focus on unequal opportunity structures

indeed explains some of the attractions of violent identities, the actual occurrence of violence is much better explained by how these inequalities are expressed in actual relational structures of the barrio as a whole, and the networks of el malandreo in particular. The dense and informal networks of the barrio make conflict at once more likely and less avoidable, and have allowed for the institutionalisation of el malandreo, an identity that offers existential meaning as well as informal social control. Violence between malandros spreads through violent interactions that generate expectations and justify deadly violence as a pre-emptive response to future violence.

These observations question the relevance of looking for individual motivations in aspects of the social structure in order to explain violence. Assuming people are motivated to use violence because of structural inequalities depletes these people of their agency and almost excuses them for their violence, a role they are happy to take on and that is even diffused through the code of el malandreo, which sees malandros as protectors of the barrio. It makes more sense to explore the interactions in which violence does occur, rather than the people that apply it. A focus on how inequality is expressed in people's interactions and relationships rather than a distribution of resources absolves us from inferring motivations, by looking at how violence and violent identities attain meaning in interaction. Rather than an attribute of deprived offenders, violence becomes a script that is recalled in particular interactions. Contagion theories help us understand how violent interactions generate expectations for future interactions and facilitate the spread of violence. A focus on these relationships also shows how these identities generate different forms of inclusion and social organisation over and above how they are defined by exclusion from mainstream society.

Violence, it is argued here, is best understood as a characteristic of interactions and relationships, not a characteristic of people or their communities. To understand it – we need to look at the interactional spaces and encounters that produce violence. Nevertheless, where traditional perspectives can count on more or less readily available data, relational data are harder to come by. In section 8.4, I look at how these relationships might be taken on board in future research. First, I evaluate another important issue that emerges from my research.

### **8.3.2 The reverse effects of violence and the reproduction of inequalities**

Most theoretical thinking sees violence as an effect of inequality, whether through generating motivations or through a lack of informal social controls. Nevertheless, in Chapter 6 we saw that violence can have an important reverse effect on people's subjective perceptions of their quality of life. In Chapter 7 we saw how violence itself generates expectations and justifies future

violence among malandros. These findings suggest violence needs to be rethought not just as a dependent but also an independent causal mechanism. Further, violence has an important reverse effect on people's interactions and subsequent patterns of inequality. The imaginary of random violence<sup>1</sup> that was discussed in Chapter 7 not only shapes malandros' expectations, but equally shapes and restricts other people's expectations and interactions patterns, in the barrio as well as the centre. People in the centre use this imaginary to order their thoughts about (and avoid) the barrio in general, whereas people from the barrio tend to categorise other barrios as more dangerous than their own. Here, I evaluate how violence can thus be seen to continuously reproduce the historical inequalities that sustain it.

The spaces of the centre are attractive targets for malandros. The violence they use here is often acquisitive, related to robberies and, as security systems grow evermore accustomed to preventing these robberies, express-kidnappings<sup>2</sup>. These types of violence are random and uncontrollable. Anyone could be the next victim, and many residents here have indeed been robbed at gunpoint, if not kidnapped. Personal experiences, frequent talk of crime and incessant media reports generate a climate of ever-present fear that makes people reliant on networks of trusted others. If one has to meet these trusted others in public, spaces of choice are enclosed restaurants and shopping centres, for their added security. Like the São Paulo described so vividly by Caldeira (2001), Venezuela's cities have become 'cities of walls'. The barrio is a no-go zone for people living in the centre. They have no reason to visit; there are no services, no friends or family. Mostly, they fear it. They know that the homicides that appear<sup>3</sup> in their newspapers on a daily basis predominantly occur here, and they often imagine the barrio as some sort of pandemonium. People in the centre often believe people from the barrio are different, uneducated, violent, speak a different language, they have nothing in common. More times than comfortable, I heard people comment more aggressively that 'they should just burn the barrios down'.

Violence and fear thereof restrict barrio residents' interaction patterns too. Nevertheless, the violence that affects the barrio is arguably qualitatively different than that which disturbs the

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<sup>1</sup> I call it an imaginary because, although it certainly reflects real events, it is shaped more by subjective interpretations of these events.

<sup>2</sup> A form of kidnapping whereby victims are forced, usually with guns, to drive their assailants to a bank to withdraw money, or held captive whilst money is extorted from families. A number of people recounted these instances to me, whereby they had also been beaten and robbed of their cars, with dramatic effects on their emotional well-being.

<sup>3</sup> Particularly in Cumaná the media use very graphic images of people killed on their front pages.

centre. Deadly violence is much more prevalent here, but more controllable in a certain way; as people in the barrio tend to know each other, they often know who lives and dies, those killed are predominantly identified as people with problems. They are often seen to have aroused a 'culebra', the colloquial term for vendetta (see Chapter 7), through an action of their own, and thus held more or less responsible for their untimely death. This is an important psychological coping mechanism amongst this deadly violence – people convince themselves that if they can avoid problems, they will be fine. Violence is thus easily normalised and even denied. People often see adjoining barrios as much more dangerous, and in these adjoining barrios many people think it is relatively safe in comparison to others. Even malandros, as discussed in Chapter 7, often project this violence onto other barrios, where the situation is 'candela', literally meaning 'on fire', dangerous or kicking-off. Deaths that occur in other barrios cannot easily be rationalised as the rules and antagonists in other barrios are often unknown, newspaper reports and rumours shape an interpretation of these deaths as random and ubiquitous. People's own sectors often seem relatively safe. Even if gun fights and homicides regularly occur on their streets these are indeed often confined to the conflict networks of el malandreo. As long as malandros are victimised, the violence is sort of acceptable, they play the game and deserve the consequences. People that do not cause trouble or do not interfere with others should be safe. Further, and maybe more importantly, people in these sectors know the local malandros and that the local malandros know them. Malandros too, stick by the rules of a life where they have become the guardians of the neighbourhood; if they mess with neighbours they risk losing the quietly sanctioned refuge of the barrio. This gives people some sort of control over the fragility of life in these sectors, although it is brittle and restricted to their own barrio.

As it is difficult to anticipate what lays beyond the boundaries of the barrio, people equally restrain their interactions to whom and what is known. Barrio residents do not tend to visit other informal areas, unless they know someone that can pick them up and guide them to the safety of their house. The unknown (and incontrollable) sectors in between their own barrio and the centre foster anxiety. The barrio does not hold people captive nor is it stationary. People move – temporarily and permanent, following love or opportunity. But they tend to do so within circles of close and trustworthy family and select friends and neighbours. Like in the centre, bonding between people similar in status and perspectives, is the traditional and prevailing relational mechanism. This way, the differences between the barrio and the centre are continuously reproduced through (a lack of) interaction between them. People on either side of the class boundary tend to interact with select groups of trusted people, further limiting an exchange of resources, ideas and opportunities.

Violence thus has important reverse effects, on the institution of *el malandreo* as we saw in Chapter 7, as well as on people that have used violence as Chapter 6 explained, but also society and its inequalities as a whole. Figure 8-1 shows the continuous reproduction of informality and insecurity, conditions where *el malandreo* and its violence find maximum expression.

**Figure 8-1 The reproduction of violence and inequalities**



A continued lack of formal opportunities and formal social control generates uncertainties and insecurities that make people reliant on informal networks or private markets for the provision of various needs. If violence in the *barrio* is manageable by sticking to what is known, the higher-classes are arguably better able to protect themselves through private means and a more visibly present police. In the centre, police patrols are frequent, private security systems top-quality. *Barrios* do not often have a continued police presence, and little in way of privately securing their homes. It is precisely this lack of formal social control, coupled with the lack of formal opportunities and vivid and often conflictive social life in the *barrio* that gave rise to informal rules and social control mechanisms like *el malandreo*. As *el malandreo* started to fill some of the vacuums left by the state, particularly its monopoly on violence, the additional insecurity their violence generates further makes people reliant on these informal networks, continuously reproducing inequalities as well as violence. The fear associated with deadly violence limits social interaction between people considered other and reinforces boundaries, endlessly reproducing inequalities in access to opportunities and physical security. Violence too is thus an integral component that maintains Venezuela's inequalities and reproduces the boundaries that divide Venezuela's populace in the 'immense minority and the plentiful few' (Pedrazzini, 2009).

This continuation of insecurity and informality sheds light on an important brief for the state, lifting some of these uncertainties would certainly relieve some of the meanings of el malandreo. Nevertheless, the networks of el malandreo, and the gun violence they use independently affect these insecurities through generating fear and making people ever more reliant on informal networks. These observations bring us to some important implications for policy and research.

## **8.4 Implications**

In this section I review this thesis' implications for policy and research.

### **8.4.1 Policy**

This thesis showed that deadly violence in Venezuela is a violence enacted with guns and in public places, between people that hardly know each other (see Chapters 3 and 7). It reflects more closely the type of gang gun violence that has been studied extensively in the US than it does other types of homicides between people that know each other, with important implications for policy. The fact that this violence reflects patterns of gun gang violence in the US suggests that perhaps policies that have addressed the contagion of this type of violence in this context might also be effective in Venezuela. Cure violence (Slutkin, 2013) for instance, is a programme that looks at violence from a health perspective and involves local community members as violence interrupters. These interrupters are often ex-gang members whom can count on established relationships of trust in the communities where they work, engaging with local gang groups to stop them from taking revenge and interrupting cycles of deadly violence. They have recently started exporting their framework to Latin America. Similar approaches have been applied in Venezuela, where local mothers came together to stop their sons killing each other in a Caracas neighbourhood (Llorens et al., 2015), and also in Cumaná, where a pacification project put an end to killing among malandros within a barrio (see Chapter 7). Nevertheless, the experience of Cumaná, where malandros, even if they have been given jobs and no longer engage in violence with other groups in the barrio, still see themselves as a legitimate instance to deal with people that have trespassed ambiguous community norms, suggests this cannot be the only strategy.

The institutionalisation of el malandreo as an informal social control mechanism in the barrio raises particularly difficult questions for policy makers. It should be considered whether these networks might be included in the security debate, as they are sometimes trusted more than an arbitrary police force and can be seen as capable actors that are equally adversely affected by



deadly violence. All of the malandros I spoke to were negative about the violence they use, and would like to see an end to the killings. This requires a resolution of longstanding *culebras*, vendettas, in the first instance, but also opportunities whereby they can construct a truly meaningful life project, and most important of all a credible formal social control agency. Recent policy in Venezuela has seen the return to a ‘mano dura’, hard-handed law and order, approach with questionable effects on the human rights not just of malandros, but *barrio* residents generally (Pérez Hernáiz and Smilde, 2015). It is doubtful these policies will generate a long overdue climate of formal security, if not have the reverse effect of strengthening the networks of *el malandreo*. This hard-handed approach might lead malandros to find a common enemy in the state and organise amongst them, as some newspaper articles have suggested has happened in some of Caracas’ southern *barrios* (Risque, 2015). Continued informal institutionalisation might limit violence between different malandro groups, but also strengthen their grip, as today’s disorganised factions might consolidate power, an evolution that has also been observed in some of Brazil’s favelas (Willis, 2009).

Sustained political polarisation, which has the government blaming the opposition for this violence and vice versa is extremely counterproductive. It dramatically impedes an understanding of violence in this context, reflected in a continued unavailability of homicide data. This continued absence of reliable data and the air of mystery that is created by keeping them from public scrutiny feeds into speculative reporting and further nourishes the generalised fear described above. The government should drastically reconsider its policy on this front and understand that knowledge might support its efforts rather than impede them. Acknowledging that violence itself is related more to interactional dynamics between malandros than national policy might move the government forward here, although this should not absolve it from its responsibility to deal with the distal causes of this violence, the continued absence of formal institutions as well as truly empowering opportunities for its young men. Additionally, by focussing on the interactions and relationships that sustain inequalities, this thesis showed these inequalities are not deliberate nor intentional. They can be understood by relational mechanisms such as homophily, which implies people interact more comfortably with people similar to themselves. In this view, aggregate inequalities are a function of the interactions and relationships that define people’s access to resources rather than a deliberate strategy of the rich. A government discourse that stigmatises the rich (see Chapter 3) and stresses difference rather than similarity further obstructs the development of vertical ties and an exchange of resources and ideas.

### 8.4.2 Empirical research

The research findings also have some important implications for future research, at the micro- as well as macro-level.

Macro-level research approaches have the advantage of being able to use more or less readily available homicide data, and substantial variation therein, to test their assumptions<sup>4</sup>. Nevertheless, they are limited by abstract boundaries that do not necessarily reflect these assumptions, and abovementioned continued focus on violent people as rational-actors. These approaches often conceive of homicide rates as reflecting violent people rather than violent interactions. The often found correlations between inequality and violence suggest more unequal societies have more violent interactions, not more violent people. An issue that is reiterated by this study. Macro-level studies should thus focus more often on how people's interactions, over and above aggregate community or individual attributes, make this violence possible. Of course, indicators of people's actual interactions and relationships are harder to come by. It is difficult to think of objective, i.e. not based on survey methods, macro-level indicators that could reflect these interactions. Nevertheless, network theory, in a world of increasingly available data and growing awareness of complexity, is a promising area of methodological innovation. Data as diverse as email traffic and mobile phone GPS locations can be incorporated as indicators of interactions in network studies. The limitations of aggregate boundaries can be overcome by using surveys that question people on their actual social relationships and evaluating how these relationships reflect aggregate boundaries. Researchers have for a long time now used large-scale surveys to evaluate people's actual interactions and relationships, and the diversity of their personal networks (Lin, 2002; Wellman, 1999), but these have not frequently been related to differential levels of violence.

In all, little evidence emerges for social disorganisation perspectives that assume people's relationships can mitigate connections between inequality and violence by instilling control mechanisms. Researchers should focus on actual relationships rather than their effects. As discussed in Chapter 2, research that has looked at these relationships often finds strong ties in violent communities (see 2.3.2.2). Anomie theories have rarely been tested empirically as Chapter 2 argued (see 2.3.1.1). First of all, it is difficult to measure the discrepancy between

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<sup>4</sup> The institutional context of Venezuela makes macro-level research extremely difficult. Homicide data are not officially available, and few representative surveys are done, limiting knowledge of the macro-level correlates of violence in this context.

structural opportunities and cultural expectations that are said to generate motivations to engage in violence. An approach that looks at how inequality is reflected in people's actual relationships, rather than income differences might shed more light on these perspectives. Findings should perhaps not be interpreted in terms of providing people with motivations, but in terms of generating meaning in interactions. Using different dependent variables, such as levels of gang membership rather than homicide rates might also provide interesting findings, as this thesis shows that aggregate discrepancies between opportunities and expectations better explain the attractions of violent identities than violence itself.

This thesis suggests the type of deadly violence that was evaluated here may be different to violence we know most of in different contexts, a violence between people that know each other. Further this type of violence was also shown to have important reverse effects. Macro-level studies should thus incorporate indicators for previous violence and distinguish between different types of violence, such as armed and non-armed violence, or where possible, gang-related and non-gang-related violence. More efforts need to be made to conceptualise the absence of formal social control. Legal cynicism perspectives offer interesting potential here, but they are also reliant on survey measures, where people's attitudes towards the legitimacy of the law can be measured. This research also showed the importance of qualitative data that offer a much deeper understanding of aggregate indicators. Macro-level studies can also be accompanied by qualitative work that offers a historical understanding of how inequalities are expressed in people's interactions and relationships.

Micro-level studies on violence are limited by difficulties in observing actual instances of violence, which are relatively rare and almost per definition hidden. The variation in homicide rates that is available at the macro-level is more difficult to obtain at the micro-level, as even the most violent people are violent only a minority of their time (Collins, 2009). These studies are often necessarily reliant on individual-level measures of past violence, which lend themselves better to rational-actor explanations that look at how violent individuals differ from non-violent individuals. This thesis shows that, in looking at these individuals' actual interactions and relationships, few individual differences emerge between people that had involved in violence and those that had not, suggesting overall relational structures might better explain violence than individual attributes. This is an important contribution that needs to be explored in further detail and with much larger samples. Previous research of the personal networks of prisoners in Holland (de Cuyper et al., 2013) and adolescents in a Maryland neighbourhood

(Roman et al., 2012), equally found few structural network differences between people involved in violence and others.

Looking at violence as an interaction is methodologically and conceptually challenging, but this thesis suggests more work needs to be done to understand why individuals engage in violence at some times, but not others, and that an understanding of these interactions can truly advance research on violence. This thesis has shown the promises of personal network methods in understanding how people's interactions and relationships reproduce inequalities, and can also be conducive to violence. Personal networks allow for exploring people's relationships as concrete source of their opportunities, ideas and behaviours. These network measures give us an indication of respondents' interaction patterns as a whole, but in this particular exercise I cannot distinguish their violent from non-violent interactions. Other network researchers have shown increasing interest in the study of so-called negative or conflictive interactions and relationships (Everett and Borgatti, 2014). Future research could explore how a personal network methodology could incorporate negative, or in this case violent, interactions. In this study, it was difficult to get people to explore their violent relationships in detail. More in-depth interviews, which focus specifically on these interactions, justifying why it is important, i.e. not to judge these people, but to see why they were violent on this particular occasion and not others, might offer respite here. This type of study should also be able to ensure anonymity not just for the respondents, but also their contacts. Many people were opposed to naming these people because I would perhaps be able to identify them. These contacts could be identified by initials or nicknames.

In all, little evidence emerges for individual-level social control perspectives that assume strong ties can keep people from violence. These perspectives should look at how they can incorporate violence as social control, by exploring more carefully the interactions in which violence occurs. They should also make a distinction between deviant and non-deviant ties, and evaluate how the relative strength of these different types of relationships might make violence more likely. Individual-level research on strain and relative deprivation perspectives is limited by having to rely on measures of motivations after the violence has occurred. The true spirit of relative deprivation theory entails measuring a subjective feeling of deprivation, and a comparison to a reference group. These are both difficult to materialise, on top of the difficulties in measuring violence. It is difficult to see how truly accurate measures that measure deprivation before violence may be obtained beyond experimental research designs in a laboratory environment. Nevertheless, this thesis made an important contribution by measuring deprivation in

comparison to people's actual interaction groups. Future research could replicate this strategy and also explore this further by incorporating people's violent interactions and relationships and evaluating whether they might feel relatively deprived in these particular interactions or in comparison to these people.

This thesis also found some important gender differences that were not explained very well by traditional perspectives and need to be paid much more attention in the literature. Further, just like macro-level research, micro-level research should make a distinction between different types of violence, importantly between violence that occurs in relationships and violence that does not. It should also look at how violent interactions shape future interactions. Whole network approaches are promising here. Papachristos (2007) for instance was able to evaluate how violence spreads between gangs using gang homicide data in Chicago. This thesis also showed the importance of qualitative data to interpret these findings. A mixed methodology has many benefits that can be taken advantage of in future research.

Having engaged with malandros and come to see them as intelligent and capable actors, I also see particular potential for action research approaches. These types of approaches engage in a problem identification with respondents as capable actors, empowering them to take control and work towards transforming their own realities. Arguably malandros themselves are the people that can shed most light on their conditions and should also be urged to take responsibility for ending the violence. Having them take responsibility may also have an empowering effect, addressing the existential meanings they find in engaging in el malandreo.

### **8.5 Limitations**

This study was exploratory and hypothesis-generating rather than representative and hypothesis-testing. I wanted to explore the connections between inequality and violence in Venezuela and did not have the means to conduct a fully representative study. Venezuela's institutional context also shaped the research approach and consequent findings as discussed in much more detail in Chapter 4. I originally wanted to select two violent sectors where I was hoping to conduct personal network interviews. Nevertheless, due to the unavailability of homicide data at the neighbourhood level, I had to rely on a qualitative research phase to select neighbourhoods where I was then going to do further research. This approach did not work, as people kept directing me to different neighbourhoods that were more violent, which led me to do interviews in hospitals and a prison in Cumaná. Prison would probably have offered better

access to malandros than hospitals, as many malandros that get shot today are killed instantly (see Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 p.99) but I was only allowed to enter prison in Cumaná.

In the end, this approach helped me gain an understanding of how violence is normalised in certain neighbourhoods, and also that neighbourhood-level mechanisms might not be as important in the production of violence as is the more general absence of formal institutions. Nevertheless, this also led to a small and very diverse sample that completed the semi-structured network interviews, which limits my ability to draw firm conclusions. Triangulation with qualitative data was important in supporting these findings. Further, the personal networks collected here are not of the same size, making it more difficult to compare their characteristics. This exercise wanted to explore what network data could tell us about different theoretical concepts and did not restrict people to naming a certain number of contacts. Future exercises could collect networks that are of the same size so the effects of structural network variables can be more confidently evaluated. Although this needs to be considered carefully, as setting a limit on the number of people respondents can name could affect the diversity of the network, and ensuring people's contacts are sampled from a variety of different contexts. Future research could repeat this exercise with larger and more representative samples, although the advantage of this sample was that it included many people that had engaged in a variety of violent events.

Further, where personal networks allow us to look at people's relationships as concrete reflections of their opportunities, ideas and behaviours, they are still a selective measure of the diversity of people's relationships. They still see people's relationship as a personal attribute and tell us relatively little of the overall structure of relationships. Whole network approaches that look at interactions within a defined boundary are better suited to evaluate the spread of information and also violence.

It is difficult to appreciate whether these findings can be extrapolated beyond the Venezuelan context, although the similarities with gang violence in the US and also Brazil suggest these findings are generalizable to gang violence in different contexts. Nevertheless, because this thesis focused on deadly violence, the question of whether and how inequality relates to everyday violence, a violence that more often occurs between people that know each other, remains unanswered. It may well be that individual motivations or an absence of informal social controls better explain this type of violence. However, a focus on the actual interactions in which this type of violence –a violence between people that know each other and is thus arguably even

more subject to the characteristics of these relationships— occurs can also help us understand it better.

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**APPENDIX 1. SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS AND NETWORK MEASURES**

**Table 3 Main profession of respondents by sex, and average reported income (N=45)**

| Sector                      | Male (n) | Female (n) | Total N (%) | Average Income (VEF) |
|-----------------------------|----------|------------|-------------|----------------------|
| <b>WAGED</b>                | 9        | 3          | 12 (27%)    |                      |
| Skilled Public              | 2        | 1          | 3           | 5,433                |
| Skilled Private             | 1        | -          | 1           | 12,000               |
| Unskilled Public            | 4        | 1          | 5           | 3,680                |
| Unskilled Private           | 2        | 1          | 3           | 3,667                |
| <b>UNWAGED</b>              |          |            | 33 (73%)    |                      |
| Unskilled labour            | 4        | 1          | 5           | 4,180                |
| Informal /self-employed     | 10       | 3          | 13          | 9,390                |
| • (Moto)taxi/messenger      | 2        | -          | 2           | 11,000               |
| • Barber                    | 1        | -          | 1           | 8,600                |
| • Stall owner/Street vendor | 4        | 3          | 7           | 6,870                |
| • Artist                    | 1        | -          | 1           | 25,000               |
| • Malandro                  | 2        |            | 2           | NA                   |
| Non-remunerated             | 8        | 7          | 15 (38%)    | NA                   |
| • Prisoner                  | 3        | 1          | 4           | NA                   |
| • Student                   | 2        | 3          | 5           | NA                   |
| • Nothing                   | 3        | 3          | 6           | NA                   |
| <b>Total</b>                | 31       | 14         | 45          | 6,496                |

**Table 4 Respondents' perceptions of quality of life (N=45)**

|   | N  | Average | Min  | Max  | Standard Deviation |
|---|----|---------|------|------|--------------------|
| Average Quality of life                   | 45 | 5.6     | 0.0  | 10.0 | 1.8                |
| Average quality of life five years ago    | 35 | 5.4     | 0.0  | 10.0 | 3.0                |
| Average quality of life now – 5 years ago | 35 | 0.5     | -7.0 | 5.0  | 3.0                |

**Table 5 Indicators of respondents' involvement in and attitudes towards violence**

|                              | N  | Average | Min | Max | Standard Deviation |
|------------------------------|----|---------|-----|-----|--------------------|
| Composite violence indicator | 45 | 1.8     | 1.0 | 3.6 | 0.8                |
| Self-control                 | 42 | 3.8     | 1.9 | 5.0 | 0.9                |

|                                       |    |            |     |     |     |
|---------------------------------------|----|------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Beliefs in the legitimacy of violence | 35 | <b>2.3</b> | 1.0 | 4.4 | 1.0 |
|---------------------------------------|----|------------|-----|-----|-----|

**Table 6 Average composition of respondents' personal networks according to type of relationship**

| Characteristics       | Average | Min | Max | Standard Deviation |
|-----------------------|---------|-----|-----|--------------------|
| Partners and children | 6%      | 0%  | 36% | 8%                 |
| General family        | 46%     | 17% | 85% | 15%                |
| Neighbours            | 12%     | 0%  | 47% | 11%                |
| Colleagues            | 13%     | 0%  | 39% | 12%                |
| Friends               | 19%     | 0%  | 58% | 14%                |
| Other                 | 5%      | 0%  | 25% | 6%                 |

**Table 7 Average composition of respondents' personal networks according to gender and average age of alters**

|                    | Average | Min | Max | Standard Deviation |
|--------------------|---------|-----|-----|--------------------|
| <b>Gender</b>      |         |     |     |                    |
| Proportion Males   | 52%     | 16% | 79% | 14%                |
| Proportion Females | 48%     | 21% | 84% | 14%                |
| <b>Homophily</b>   | 55%     | 16% | 79% | 13%                |
| <b>Average Age</b> |         |     |     |                    |
| Average Age        | 37      | 27  | 53  | 6                  |
| <b>Homophily</b>   | 6%      | 0%  | 44% | 8%                 |

**Table 8 Average composition of respondents' personal networks according to living area**

|                    | Average | Min | Max  | Standard deviation |
|--------------------|---------|-----|------|--------------------|
| <b>Living area</b> |         |     |      |                    |
| Higher-class area  | 4%      | 0%  | 65%  | 13%                |
| Middle-class area  | 8%      | 0%  | 40%  | 11%                |
| Satellite City     | 9%      | 0%  | 43%  | 11%                |
| Barrio             | 63%     | 0%  | 100% | 27%                |
| Prison/street      | 2%      | 0%  | 50%  | 8%                 |
| Other city         | 8%      | 0%  | 59%  | 11%                |
| Other country      | 1%      | 0%  | 15%  | 3%                 |
| Unknown            | 1%      | 0%  | 13%  | 4%                 |

|                   |     |    |      |     |
|-------------------|-----|----|------|-----|
| Homophily         |     |    |      |     |
| Same type of area | 63% | 0% | 100% | 26% |

**Table 9 Average composition of respondents' personal networks according to professional sector of alters**

|                          | Average | Min | Max | Standard deviation |
|--------------------------|---------|-----|-----|--------------------|
| <b>WAGED</b>             | 33%     | 4%  | 82% | 20%                |
| Public sector skilled    | 2%      | 0%  | 20% | 4%                 |
| Private sector skilled   | 7%      | 0%  | 35% | 9%                 |
| Public sector unskilled  | 13%     | 0%  | 47% | 13%                |
| Private sector unskilled | 11%     | 0%  | 44% | 11%                |
| <b>UNWAGED</b>           | 67%     | 18% | 96% | 20%                |
| Unskilled labour         | 16%     | 0%  | 57% | 14%                |
| Informal/ self-employed  | 19%     | 0%  | 50% | 13%                |
| Non-remunerated          | 15%     | 0%  | 42% | 11%                |
| Student                  | 15%     | 0%  | 42% | 11%                |
| Don't know               | 2%      | 0%  | 39% | 6%                 |
| <b>Homophily</b>         |         |     |     |                    |
| Profession               | 16%     | 0%  | 50% | 13%                |
| Sector                   | 32%     | 0%  | 72% | 17%                |
| Waged/ unwaged           | 69%     | 14% | 96% | 18%                |

**Table 10 Average composition of respondents' personal networks according to average quality of life of alters (N=44)**

|                                | Average | Min | Max | Standard Deviation |
|--------------------------------|---------|-----|-----|--------------------|
| <b>Average Quality of life</b> | 6.0     | 1.2 | 9.0 | 1.8                |
| <b>Homophily</b>               | 28%     | 0%  | 92% | 25%                |

**Table 11 Average composition of respondents' personal networks according to strength of ties (N=45)**

|                    | Average | Min | Max | Standard deviation |
|--------------------|---------|-----|-----|--------------------|
| <b>Proximity</b>   |         |     |     |                    |
| Same house         | 17%     | 0%  | 50% | 13%                |
| Same neighbourhood | 24%     | 0%  | 72% | 18%                |
| Same city          | 34%     | 0%  | 85% | 22%                |
| Other city         | 24%     | 0%  | 93% | 24%                |
| Other country      | 1%      | 0%  | 15% | 3%                 |

|                             |     |     |     |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| <b>Length of knowing</b>    |     |     |     |     |
| Years known                 | 18  | 7   | 35  | 7   |
| standardised for age        | 60% | 29% | 87% | 13% |
|                             |     |     |     |     |
| <b>Trust</b>                |     |     |     |     |
| Average trust               | 3.8 | 2.1 | 5.0 | 0.7 |
|                             |     |     |     |     |
| <b>Frequency of contact</b> |     |     |     |     |
| Every day                   | 44% | 0%  | 88% | 19% |
| Every week                  | 23% | 0%  | 71% | 14% |
| Every month                 | 18% | 0%  | 48% | 13% |
| Less frequently             | 12% | 0%  | 43% | 12% |

Table 12 Average network density (N=45)

|                | <b>Average</b> | <b>Min</b> | <b>Max</b> | <b>Standard deviation</b> |
|----------------|----------------|------------|------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Density</b> | .60            | .16        | 1.00       | .23                       |



**APPENDIX 2. FIELD INSTRUMENTS**

1. Study information sheet
2. Stakeholder interview guide
3. Group interview guide
4. Semi-structured interview guide



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**Invitación de participación en proyecto de  
investigación sobre Desigualdad y Violencia en Venezuela**

*Usted está invitado(a) a participar en un proyecto de investigación. Antes de decidir si va a participar o no, es importante entender los objetivos y metodologías del estudio. Por favor, tome un tiempo para leer las siguientes informaciones.*

El interés del estudio es en una presumida relación entre 'desigualdad' y 'violencia'. En Venezuela la relación entre estos conceptos parece invertida. El país ha logrado importantes avances en términos de disminución de la desigualdad de ingresos, mientras que la violencia, en términos de homicidios, ha aumentado.

El objetivo principal del estudio es entender esta supuesta paradoja, por medio de entrevistas con habitantes de dos áreas del país, Caracas y Cumaná. De hecho, sus experiencias y perspectivas son sumamente importante para obtener un entendimiento mas amplio de la desigualdad tanto como la violencia. Seria muy agradecida si me daría el permiso para entrevistarle en uno o dos ocasiones. Cada entrevista variara en tiempo, según sus respuestas y experiencias, pero no tardara mas de una a dos horas en cada ocasión. En la entrevista hablaremos de su contexto familiar, su barrio, su vida diaria y las personas que le rodean. Le pediré nombrar algunas personas de su contexto, para poder evaluar la diversidad y densidad de las redes personales en Venezuela. Hay algunas preguntas sobre la violencia que pueden ser sensibles, se le recuerda que siempre pueda rechazar responder cualquiera pregunta. Todo se mantendrá completamente confidencial y nunca se vinculará con sus datos personales.

El proyecto de investigación es parte de la finalización de mi doctorado en Estudios del Desarrollo en la Escuela de Estudios Globales de la Universidad de Sussex, Inglaterra. El proyecto está financiado por el Consejo de Investigación Económica y Social (ESRC) en Inglaterra. Ha sido aprobado a través del proceso de revisión ética de la Universidad de Sussex. Los datos recopilados serán procesados y analizados de acuerdo con sus procedimientos estrictos de confidencialidad.

Su participación es totalmente voluntaria y libre. Usted será libre de retirarse en cualquier momento durante la entrevista, sin ninguna consecuencia y sin dar razón alguna. Sus datos serán manejados de manera completamente anónima.

Pediré grabar la entrevista para no necesitar tomar notas, usted estará siempre libre de rechazar esa grabación. En caso de ser efectuada, la grabación será transcrita para facilitarme el análisis. Las grabaciones serán borradas y las transcripciones se almacenarán en cumplimiento con las directrices de la Universidad de Sussex. Los datos anónimos serán analizados para mi tesis doctoral, que estará disponible al público.

En caso de necesitar más información sobre la investigación, por favor no dude en ponerse en contacto conmigo por medio de mi correo electrónico: [ellen.vdb@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:ellen.vdb@sussex.ac.uk). En caso de cualquier inquietud restante, acerca de la forma de levantamiento de la investigación, por favor póngase en contacto con Julie Litchfield, mi supervisora principal en la Universidad de Sussex, en su correo electrónico [J.A.Litchfield@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:J.A.Litchfield@sussex.ac.uk).

Muchas gracias por leer esta información cuidadosamente. Espero que participe en el proyecto y le resulte una experiencia útil y estimulante.

**TITULO DE PROYECTO:****Desigualdad y Violencia en Venezuela**

---

Estoy de acuerdo en participar en el proyecto de investigación de la Universidad de Sussex. El proyecto me ha sido explicado por completo y he leído y comprendido la ficha de información.

Entiendo que participar quiere decir que estoy dispuesto a ser entrevistado por la investigadora y permitiré que la entrevista sea grabada y transcrita.

Entiendo que cualquier información que dé es confidencial, y que ninguna información que revele conducirá a la identificación de cualquier persona en los informes sobre el proyecto, tanto por la investigadora o por cualquier otra parte.

Entiendo que mi participación es voluntaria, que puede optar por no participar en una parte o la totalidad del proyecto, y que puede retirarme en cualquier etapa del proyecto, sin ser penalizado o desfavorecido de ninguna manera.

Estoy de acuerdo con el tratamiento de mis datos personales a los efectos de este estudio de investigación. Entiendo que dicha información será considerada estrictamente confidencial y se tratará de acuerdo con la Ley de Protección de Datos de 1998.

Nombre: \_\_\_\_\_

Firma: \_\_\_\_\_

Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Stakeholder interview guide**

**Actores claves.**

A aprender sobre tipos, formas y cambios en...

- La economía informal!
- La violencia
- La pobreza
- El bienestar objetivo – vivienda, educación, pobreza
- El bienestar subjetivo
- Las redes sociales

**INTRO**

Soy una estudiante de doctorado de la universidad de Sussex en Inglaterra. Estoy investigando la relación entre desigualdad y violencia. La comunidad académica puede aprender bastante de los cambios recientes en Venezuela. Parece que se han visto cambios muy importantes en términos de desigualdad y participación local. Sin embargo, parece que la violencia está subiendo. He elegido dos sitios en Venezuela con diferentes tipos de desigualdad, para ayudarme entender estos cambios y procesos. Estoy particularmente interesada en definiciones locales de bienestar y desigualdad, y si pueden ser relacionados con diferentes tipos o formas de violencia. En los siguientes meses voy a hacer entrevistas en las comunidades de Sucre y Cumana.

Usted, como experto/a / especialista en [...] me puede ayudar muchísimo a entender estas comunidades. Espero que me puede dar un poco de su tiempo.

Quisiera recordar la entrevista porque se me hace difícil anotar todo por completo. Este se va transcribir, se le puede enviar la transcripción para que revise cualquier cosa.

Su participación es totalmente voluntaria y libre. Usted será libre de retirarse en cualquier momento durante la entrevista, sin ninguna consecuencia y sin dar razón alguna. Sus datos serán manejados de manera completamente anónima.

**PREGUNTAS**

**Cuál es su oficio aquí? Cuánto tiempo lleva aquí? ...**

**Perfil de la comunidad.**

MATRIZ población -

- Composición de viviendas (jefatura masculina/ femenina) Viviendas complejas o núcleos?
- Infraestructura,
- Ingresos (por genero), mayores formas de empleo /ganarse la vida en esta comunidad/ barrio? (diferencias por genero!?) ¿qué actividades?
- Migración (afuera? por trabajo?)
- Comunicaciones - television, periodicos,
- grupos etnicos? Migration?
- identidad?

○ **Bienestar en la comunidad?**

- Hay una cualidad de vida buena en la comunidad? ¿Como definirias cualidad de vida? Que puede impedir la cualidad de vida? Como se compare a otros comunidades?
- Pobreza? Como se manifiesta la pobreza?
- Comparaciones por tiempo y espacio! Comparado a otros comunidades

- Como ha cambiado la cualidad de vida? La pobreza?
- futuro???
- **Problemas?**
  - ¿Cuales son las problemas en la comunidad local?
  - ¿Como han cambiado?
  - ¿Hay un problema de violencia?
    - Los cuales tipos o formas de violencia? P.e. violencia familiar, de genero, criminalidad, delitos menores, juveniles, antisociales, hurto, robo, secuestro, homicidios, violencia en las escuelas, jóvenes...
    - adonde ocurren?? en la calle?? cerca de que??
    - ORDENAR segun prevalencia y importancia (impacto?)
    - ¿Como se compare con otras comunidades, el resto del pais?
    - ¿Ha cambiado en los ultimos 2, 5, 10 años? Ha disminuido o crecido? ¿Otros formas / tipos?
    - ¿Cuales son las causas de la violencia? ¿Quien son los autores?
- **¿Brechas importantes?**
  - ¿Los cuales son los grupos sociales en la comunidad? P.e. segun edad, genero, jerarquía social, afiliación política, bienestar económico...
  - ¿Hay gente excluida de acceso / cualquier proceso en la comunidad?
  - ¿Ha cambiado?
  - ¿Tejido social de la comunidad? ¿Cohesion comunitaria? ¿Hay conflictos?
  - ¿Como difiere la comunidad de comunidades alrededor, y el pais?
  - ¿cuales son sus grupos referenciales? Las limites fronteras sociales son permeables? hay oportunidades para la movilidad social? la gente puede mejorarse?
  - ¿diferencias / exclusion son justos???
- **¿Instituciones?**
  - Cuales instituciones comunitarias existen aqui en la comunidad? ¿Civiles? ¿Estadales? P.e.. consejo communal, religiosas, seguridad, vecinales, juveniles neighbourhood watch, youth groups...
  - DIAGRAMA INSTITUCIONAL
  - ¿Quien participe, quien no participe?
  - ¿Como la gente contribuye/ influye/ actua sobre estas organizaciones?
  - Que podria prevenir / impedir que inversiones y servicios publicos alcancen hasta los mas pobres y vulnerables? hay razones relacionadas con etnicidad, genero, agenda politica o isolacion geografica?

Muchisimas gracias por su tiempo. Les enviare la transcripcion de la grabacion para que se puede revisar. Cualquier pregunta, por favor contactame!

## **Group interview guide**

**Grupos focales.**

[2-12 participantes. Homogéneo según edad, sexo, ingreso, afiliación política.]

Soy estudiante de doctorado en la universidad de Sussex en Inglaterra. Estoy estudiando Venezuela porque en los últimos años se han implementado cambios muy importantes en este país, de los cuales nosotros en otros países también podríamos aprender muchísimo. Estoy enfocándome particularmente en comunidades de Catia y Cumana para entender como estos cambios han afectado a la gente, y el impacto que han tenido en las vidas diarias de la gente.

En este grupo, quiero explorar percepciones locales de bienestar y cambios en estas percepciones. También quiero aprender las cuales son los problemas que perciben en la comunidad, y las redes y relaciones con las cuales cuentan para su apoyo material tal como emocional. Vamos a utilizar algunas metodologías y técnicas distintas, como la ordenación, marcación, el dibujo en hojas de papel A4. Les explicaré mientras avanzamos.

[XX] está aquí para ayudarme a facilitar la discusión. Es importante saber que la investigación se hace completamente independiente de [xx], para mi tesis doctoral. Los resultados se compartirán con [xx]... Espero que ustedes pueden aprender también.

Por favor, acuérdense que si no estén cómodos con algunas preguntas, siempre tienen el derecho para no responder. Estén libres de salir de la discusión a cualquier tiempo y sin tener que justificarlo. Todo lo que dicen aquí es completamente confidencial. Sus nombres nunca saldrán en ningún informe y ninguna persona podría identificarlos. Me gustaría grabar la discusión para no tener que tomar notas de todo lo que dicen. Estas grabaciones se transcribirán y se destruirán después. Ni esas transcripciones ni las citas que utilizare en mi tesis les identificarán. Utilizare un seudónimo por la comunidad y características demográficas generales por las citas (como un hombre de mediana edad de xx dice...)

Por favor, firmen ese consentimiento, para demostrar que les he explicado mis objetivos, ustedes los entienden y han aceptado participar en la discusión. Pueden guardar la hoja de información para si quieren contactarme en el futuro.

Todo que me queda decir es que no hay respuestas buenas o malas, justas o falsas. Yo estoy aquí para aprender de ustedes, ustedes son los expertos!

Por favor respetamos las opiniones de todos aquí presente y escuchamos lo que tengan a decir. Hablamos cada uno a su vez. Algunas de las cosas que vamos a discutir pueden parecer repetitivos. Tienen paciencia, estoy tratando de los asuntos / temas desde perspectivas distintas.

**¿Hay preguntas?**

**¿Pueden introducirse por favor?** ¿Quien es/eres? ¿Cuánto tiempo lleva(s) viviendo aquí?

Alguien tiene problemas con grabar la discusión desde aquí?

*EMPIEZA GRABACIÓN*

| TEMA | PREGUNTAS | HERRAMIENTA |
|------|-----------|-------------|
|------|-----------|-------------|



|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  |  | <b>S</b>  |
|  | <p><b>Primero, me puedes contar un poco sobre su comunidad local?</b> ¿Que es la comunidad para ustedes? ¿La cual consideras tu comunidad? Límites/ fronteras administrativas,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Las cuales son los mayores formas de empleo /ganarse la vida? Hay diferencias por género?</li> <li>○ Composición de viviendas/hogares? Jefatura femenina o masculina?</li> <li>○ Cuales son los diferentes grupos sociales en la comunidad? P.e. según edad, genero, jerarquía social, afiliación política, bienestar económico/ riqueza.</li> <li>○ ¿Como ha cambiado en los últimos 2, 5, 10 años?</li> </ul> <p><i>Quisiera utilizar un seudónimo por esta comunidad en mi tesis. ¿Cual sea el nombre preferido por la comunidad?</i></p>   | <p>MAPAS DE LA COMUNIDAD – dibujos, identificando fronteras y ubicaciones claves.</p> <p>MATRIZ HISTÓRICA – mas útil con participantes mayores (fecha / evento / impacto en la comunidad)</p> |
|  | <b><u>EL BIENESTAR SUBJETIVO / CUALIDAD DE VIDA</u></b>  |   |
|  | <p><b>¿Como definiera(s) el bienestar, o una buena cualidad de vida?</b></p> <p>Lista de puntos/criterios que definen la cualidad de vida.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ordena estos artículos según IMPORTANCIA. Cual porcentaje de la comunidad tiene acceso a estos criterios? Como difiere según diferentes grupos en la comunidad? Hay alguien excluido localmente? Proporción de viviendas/ individuos en cada categoría. MARCAR</li> <li>○ Ordena la comunidad en cada de estos criterios. MARCAR</li> <li>○ Comunidad comparada con comunidades vecinas y el país?</li> <li>○ ¿Como ha cambiado en los últimos 2, 5 , 10 años? Los criterios mismos han cambiado? Algunos están mas importantes hoy que antes? ¿Porque? La gente ahora esta mejor o peor? ¿Porque?</li> <li>○ Futuro y situación ideal? A que aspira la gente??</li> </ul> | <p>MARCAR / ANOTAR (semillas, piedras) O DIAGRAMA / ESQUEMA DE CEBOLLA</p> <p>ESCALERAS!</p> <p>CRONOLOGIA/ CRONOGRAMA - hoy y hace 2, 5, 10 años</p>   |
|  | <p><b>SI PARECE DIFICIL, PREGUNTA SOBRE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ingresos</li> <li>○ Empleo</li> <li>○ Vivienda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Títulos de propiedad</li> <li>■ Agua</li> <li>■ Electricidad</li> <li>■ Aguas negras / aseo</li> <li>■ Material en paredes/ techo/ piso</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Transporte</li> </ul>  |   |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Educación</li> <li>○ Salud</li> <li>○ Apoyo emocional</li> <li>○ Seguridad</li> <li>○ Otros?</li> </ul>   |  |
|  | <p><b>PROBE. ¿Cree(n) que las oportunidades para la movilidad económica y social se han incrementado, permanecen igual o han disminuido? ¿Y como vean el futuro? ¿Porque y por todos / quien?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ¿Cuales son las secuencias de estos cambios?</li> <li>○ ¿Quien o cual(es) grupo(s) han beneficiado más? Hay personas o grupos que no han podido aprovechar de estas oportunidades o quien han sido afectados adversely? Como y porque?</li> <li>○ Que tiene que cambiar para que los pobres tendrian mas oportunidades economicas y sociales? Es probable?</li> </ul>   |  |
|  | <p><b>¿Y el malestar, o mala cualidad de vida? ¿Que son los problemas en la comunidad?</b></p> <p>Lista de problemas en la comunidad.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ¿Los cuales estan mas problematicos?</li> <li>○ ¿Cual porcentaje de la comunidad esta afectado por cada uno/a? ¿Diferentes grupos estan afectados distintamente?</li> <li>○ Estos problemas han cambiado en los últimos años o han permanecido igual?</li> <li>○ ¿Las cuales son sus esperanzas y miedos por el futuro?</li> <li>○ Análisis de causa-efecto. ¿Que causa estos problemas, o algun problema en particular?</li> <li>○ DIBUJOS - hombre/ mujer pobre</li> <li>○ ¿Soluciones? ¿Las cuales de estos problemas pueden solucionar ustedes y para las cuales necesitan ayuda/ apoyo externo?</li> <li>○ ¿Responsabilidades? ¿Quien tiene la responsabilidad para resolver estos problemas?</li> <li>○ ¿Como la gente maneja / hace frente a estos problemas / crisis? ¿Es posible salir de la pobreza?</li> </ul> | <p>CLASIFICAR /<br/>MARCAR /<br/>ANOTAR</p> <p>DIAGRAMAS<br/>VENN /<br/>CIRCULACIÓN<br/>(Tamaño de<br/>círculos según<br/>nivel de<br/>importancia,<br/>círculos mas<br/>grandes=problem<br/>as mas<br/>importantes)</p> |
|  | <b><u>VIOLENCIA/ SEGURIDAD</u></b>   |  |

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|--|--|---|
|  | <p><b>SI LA VIOLENCIA ES UN PROBLEMA. ¿Como definas la violencia? ¿Cuales tipos de violencia hay en la comunidad?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ¿Cual tiene peor impacto? ¿Cual ocurre mas?</li> <li>○ ¿Como ha(n) cambiado?</li> <li>○ Como compare con otras comunidades, el pais en general?</li> <li>○ ¿Hay diferencias por temporada? ¿Mas violencia en feriadas? ¿Armas?</li> <li>○ Cuales son las causas de diferentes formas de violencia? VENN/FLOW</li> <li>○ ¿Efectos de la violencia? ¿Quien son las victimas? ¿Victimarios? ¿Quien sufra mas? (edad, grupo social, edad)</li> <li>○ ¿Estrategias a corto, medio y soluciones a largo plazo?</li> </ul> | <p>IMPACTO Y FRECUENCIA</p> <p>CRONOLOGÍA / SECUENCIA TEMPORAL - antes, ahora, futuro</p> <p>ARBOL PROBLEMÁTICA (problema en tallo, causas en raices, efectos en ramas)</p> |
|  | <p><b>¿Como definiras seguridad y/o inseguridad? ¿Riesgo?</b></p> <p>Elementos claves / constitutivos. ¿La comunidad esta segura?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ¿Algunos individuos/viviendas están mas seguros que otros? Cuales factores hacen que algunos/as esten mas arriesgados/as?</li> <li>○ Que tan seguro/a se sienten en la comunidad? En sus casas? En las calles? La inseguridad ha mejorado o peorado?</li> <li>○ Como ha cambiado?</li> </ul>  | <p>CLASIFICAR / MARCAR / ANOTAR</p> <p>MAPAS DE SEGURIDAD - ubicaciones claves adonde gente tiene miedo de irse</p>   |
|  | <b><u>COHESION SOCIAL / EXCLUSION</u></b>  |   |
|  | <p><b>¿Como definiras la cohesion social? ¿El tejido social?</b></p> <p>¿Hay mas o menos sentido de pertenencia? Unidad social? La confianza? Porque?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ¿Cuales son las causas de confianza/disconfianza? Miedo?</li> <li>○ ¿Hay conflictos entre alguna gente / grupos en la comunidad? ¿Cual(es) gente / grupos? Porque?</li> <li>○ ¿Han incrementado, disminuido o siguen igual? ¿Porque? ¿Como?</li> <li>○ ¿Alguien se beneficia / aproveche de conflictos?</li> <li>○ ¿La situación puede cambiarse? ¿Como?</li> </ul>   | <p>CLASIFICAR / MARCAR / ANOTAR</p>   |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | <p><b>¿Hay gente/ grupos en la comunidad excluidos?</b><br/> <b>¿Mal vistos?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Quien son los mas excluidos, socialmente o economicamente aislados?</li> <li>○ Hay diferencias en poder entre los incluidos y los excluidos? Porque? Que hace unos mas poderosos que otros? Cual es el origen de influencia de estos grupos (p.e. tamaño del grupo, conexiones con elite en poder, importancia economica?)</li> <li>○ Cual es el impacto de exclusión? being left out?</li> </ul> | ORDENAMIENT<br>O de distintos tipos y causas de exclusión  |
|  | <p><b>Hay gente excluida de participación activa en la vida de la comunidad o el tomo de decisiones?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Como se hacen decisiones importantes en la comunidad? como la gente puede influir estas decisiones? Los cuales grupos tienen enos influencia y porque?</li> <li>○ Como ha cambiado? H Basis de exclusion?</li> <li>○ Es posible por los excluidos hacerse incluido? Cual probable es que van incluirse?</li> </ul>  |  |
|  | <b><u>REDES FORMALES Y INFORMALES</u></b>   |  |
|  | <p><b>Las cuales instituciones y asociaciones formales y informales estan importantes en sus vidas?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cuales son las instituciones formales, informales, de gobierno, estatales, civiles, de mercado, mas importantes?</li> <li>● Hay Misiones en esta comunidad?</li> <li>● Confianza? Eficacia?</li> <li>● Evaluación - Cuales son sus impactos positivos o negativos sobre la comunidad? Porque? Ejemplos?</li> </ul>   | MAPAS INSTITUCIONAL<br>ES (tamaño de círculos según importancia, centro -> periferia) POR integración en la comunidad, MARCAR según importancia, |
|  | <p><b>¿Le(s) parece que puede(n) influir / controlar estas instituciones?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hay grupos en la comunidad que tienen mas influencia? Hay personas que quedan excluidos?</li> </ul>  |  |
|  | <p><b>A las cuales personas o redes puedes recurrir para solucionar sus problemas?</b><br/> <b>MATRIZ DE RECURSOS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mercado, gobierno, familia, amigos etc.</li> </ul>   |  |

## **Semi-structured interview guide**

El cuestionario se enfoca en sus / tus relaciones. Nuestras relaciones son muy importantes, nos enseñan muchas cosas y satisfacen nuestras necesidades básicas de apoyo y soporte. Le / te pediré nombrarme las personas que están un su / tu vida ahora, o que han sido importantes para usted / ti en su / tu pasado. Solamente necesito el nombre de esas personas para que me pueda(s) responder otras preguntas sobre ellas, su sexo, edad aproximada, trabajo, residencia, donde les conoció/iste y cuantas veces las ve(s). Anotamos estos nombres en un papel que guardara(s) usted/ tu, no son importante para mi, de hecho saldrán como contacto 1, 2, 3, etc. Igual que usted / tu saldrá(s) completamente anónimo/a, un sujeto x, y, z del estudio. Ni usted / tú, ni las personas que me nombra(s) jamás podrían ser identificados. S/tus derechos de anonimato como sujeto de estudio son fundamentales para mi, tanto como para mi universidad y sin estas garantías nunca obtendré mi grado.

Otra parte importante del cuestionario se enfocara en tus/sus experiencias de violencia. Recuerde/a que es completamente confidencial, y nunca será posible identificarle/te. Se le /te agradece su / tu mayor honestidad para poder entender la situación que vive Venezuela y lograr aportar, sea minúsculamente, a cambiar sus realidades. Si algunas preguntas le/te parecen demasiado íntimas o difíciles siempre puede /s rechazar responderlas, diciendo que no sabe(s) la respuesta o no quiere(s) responder. Para el análisis será mucho mas útil que NO responda(s) a que sea(s) incompleto/a o deshonesto su respuesta.

No hay respuestas falsas o erróneas, usted / tu es / eres el experto en lo que vive(s). Yo estoy aquí para aprender de su / tu vida diaria. Algunas preguntas pueden parecer molestas o repetitivas, por favor tenga/ ten paciencia, todas son importantes de una u otra manera para lograr el entendimiento de la realidad Venezolana. No obstante, si hay preguntas que no tienen sentido, por favor no tenga/ s duda en decírmelo para una aclaratoria.

Quiero grabar la entrevista para no tener que tomar notas, las cuales siempre estarán incompletas y además demoraran la entrevista. Transcribiré la grabación para después borrarla. En esta transcripción nunca pondré su/tu nombre, será completamente anónima y utilizada únicamente para el análisis. Nunca podrá/ podrías ser identificado/a. Su / tu nombre nunca será grabado ni transcrito. Esta(s) de acuerdo con esa grabación?

#### **DEMOGRAFIA.**

En primer lugar, le / te haré algunas preguntas generales para poder clasificarle/te.

1. SEX. **Sexo.**
  1. Masculino
  2. Femenino
2. EDAD. **Cuantos años tiene(s)?**
3. ANO. **En que año y donde nació/iste?**
4. RA. **Según sus / tus rasgos físicos, ascendencia familiar, cultura y tradiciones se / te considera(s):**
  1. Negra/negro
  2. Afrodescendiente
  3. Moreno/morena

4. Blanca/Blanco
  5. Otra ¿cuál?
- 5. CONYUGAL. Su / tu situación conyugal actual es:**
1. Unido(a) -> 7
  2. Casado(a) -> 7
  3. Soltero(a) -> 6
  4. Separado(a) de unión o matrimonio -> 6
  5. Divorciado(a) -> 6
  6. Viudo(a) de unión o matrimonio -> 6
- 6. PAR. ¿Tiene(s) una pareja ahora? No. -> 8**
- 7. PAR1. ¿Cómo se llama su/ tu pareja?**
- 8. PAR\_x1. Hay otras parejas o ex-parejas con quien ha(s) tenido contacto en los últimos 2 años? ~Cuanto tiempo tuvieron juntos, hace cuanto?**
- 9. HIJ\_x1. ¿Tiene(s) niños/as? ¿Hijastro/as? ¿Cuántos? ¿Me puede(s) nombrar los mayores de 15 años? ~¿Con quien?**

#### **VIVIENDA/ SECTOR.**

**Ahora haré algunas preguntas sobre su/tu vivienda y el sector donde vive(s).**

- 10. SECT. ¿Cómo se llama el sector donde vive(s)? (Donde duerme(s) normalmente?)**
- 11. HOG. Cuántos hogares hay en su/tu vivienda?**
- 12. HOG\_x1. ¿Cuántas personas viven en su/tu hogar [vivienda??]? Me las puede(s) nombrar?**
- 13. JEF. ¿Quien de ellas es el jefe de hogar?**
- 14. CUART. ¿Cuántos cuartos hay? (¿ Con quien compartes un cuarto?)**
- 15. PAG. La vivienda es:**
1. Propia pagada totalmente
  2. Propia pagándose -> **cuanto pagas?**
  3. Alquilada -> **cuanto pagas?**
  4. Prestada
  5. Cedida
  6. Otra

- 16. VIVCOND.** ¿Y la vivienda es en mejor, peor o igual condición que la de tus vecinos? Y del resto del sector? ¿Porque?
- 17. VECX.** ¿Conoce(s) algunos de tus vecinos? Me puede(s) nombrar los con quien tenga(s) mas contacto o que sean mas importante para usted/ti? (máximo 5)
- 18. SECTTIEMP.** ¿Cuanto tiempo tiene(s) viviendo allí?
- 19. OTRSECT.** ¿Ha(s) vivido (o tiene(s) vivienda / habitación) en otros sectores, barrios o ciudades? ¿Cuándo, cuanto tiempo?
- 20. OTRSECTCONTX.** ¿Todavía tiene(s) contactos, familia o conocidos allá? ¿Como se llaman?
- 21. CONFSECT.** Hablando de la gente de tu / su sector en general, ¿diría que la gente de tu / su sector es:
- ESCALA A.
1. Muy confiable
  2. Algo confiable
  3. Poco confiable
  4. Nada confiable
- 22. Pensando en tu sector, diría(s) que en los últimos 10 años, la...**
- ESCALA I.
- 1 Aumento mucho
  - 2 Aumento poco
  - 3 Se mantuvo
  - 4 Disminuyo poco
  - 5 Disminuyo mucho
- A. Confianza entre vecinos**
- B. Participación en actividades para mejorar el sector (p.e. recolección de basura, construcción de canchas)**
- C. Convivencia**
- 23. Ahora le voy a leer una serie de frases, por favor dígame si está(s) de acuerdo, o en desacuerdo con cada una de ellas.**
- ESCALA B.
1. Muy en desacuerdo
  2. Algo en desacuerdo
  3. Ni en acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
  4. Algo de acuerdo
  5. Muy de acuerdo
- A. Me siento parte de mi comunidad**
- B. Los vecinos ayuden a vigilar el barrio**
- C. Conozco la mayoría de mis vecinos por nombre**
- D. Las personas estén dispuestas a atestiguar contra otro cuando lo han visto o saben de su participación en un hecho delictivo.**



- E. Un vecino ayude a otro
- F. Los vecinos intervengan en una pelea conyugal
- G. Algún vecino regañe a alguien que esté escribiendo en las paredes de una casa o edificio del barrio
- H. Alguien llame a la policía si escucha una pelea callejera

**24. CONCOM. ¿Hay un consejo comunal en su/tu sector? ¿Como se llama?**

**25. CONCOMPART. ¿Participa(s) en sus reuniones?**

ESCALA C.

1. Nunca
2. Casi nunca
3. A veces
4. Casi siempre
5. Siempre

**26. CONCOMOP. ¿Qué opina(s) sobre el trabajo que hacen en tu / su sector?**

#### **CONTEXTO FAMILIAR.**

**27. FAMX. Ahora le pediré nombrar sus/tus familiares más importantes. Me puede(s) nombrar los con quien tenga(s) mas contacto o que sean mas importante para usted/ti? (máximo 5)**

- PADR\_x1. Padres / padrastro(s) / madrastra(s)
- HERM\_x1. Hermanos/as (mayores de 15 años)
- ABU\_x1. Abuelos que estén vivos o han muerto en los últimos 2 años. Si muertos, que hicieron de trabajo?
- TIO\_x1. Tios/as con quien mantienes contacto o los/ las que sean mas importantes en tu vida personal
- PRI\_x1. Primos/as con quien mantienes contacto o los/ las que sean mas importantes en tu vida personal

#### **EDUCACION / CARRERA.**

**Ahora haré algunas preguntas sobre su/tu educación y carrera.**

**28. EDU. ¿Cuál fue su/tu último grado, año o semestre aprobado y de qué nivel educativo:**

1. Ninguno
2. Inicial (preescolar)
3. Primaria (1-6) Grado \_\_\_\_
4. Secundaria (1-5), (6) Año \_\_\_\_
5. Técnico superior Año \_\_\_\_ Semestre \_\_\_\_
6. Universitario Semestre \_\_\_\_ Trimestre \_\_\_\_

**29. ESC. ¿Cual escuela? ¿Sector? Publica / privada / misión?**

**30. LIC. ¿Liceo? ¿Sector? Publica / privada / militar?**

**31. UNI. ¿Universidad? Publica / privada / militar?**

**32. EDUP. Si universidad / técnico superior, que carrera y porque la escogió(iste)?**

**33. EDUX. Me puede(s) nombrar unas personas con quien estudio/aste, sea en el liceo o la universidad. Con quien ha(s) tenido contacto en los últimos 2 años.**

#### **TRABAJO/ INGRESOS.**

**34. TRAB. Esta(s) trabajando? [estuviste trabajando antes de entrar en la cárcel / hospital?]**

- **Si no trabaja, porque? Es difícil encontrar trabajo en su/tu ocupación? Mas difícil que hace 5 / 10 años? ¿Como se/te mantiene(s)? ¿droga?**
- **Si trabaja - en que ocupación? Cuando empezó/aste a trabajar? Donde esta ubicado? Tipo de empresa. Como conseguiste el trabajo? Era difícil?**

1. Empleado(a) en el sector público
2. Obrero(a) en el sector público
3. Empleado(a) en empresa privada
4. Obrero(a) en empresa privada
5. Trabajador (a) por cuenta propia (que no tiene empleados ni obreros)
6. Miembro de cooperativa
7. Trabajador en sociedades de personas
8. Ayudante familiar no remunerado
9. Servicio doméstico

**35. TRABX. ¿Me puede(s) nombrar algunas personas con quien trabaja(s)? Las personas con quien mas interactúa(s)? (máximo 5)**

**36. INGROTR. Tiene(s) otros fuentes de ingresos? Recibió/iste ingresos el mes pasado por alguno de los siguientes conceptos y cuánto:**

1. Trabajo Bs.
2. Renta Bs.
3. Pensión Bs.
4. Jubilación Bs.
5. Becas de origen público o privado Bs.
6. Seguro de paro forzoso Bs.
7. Pensión alimentaria Bs.
8. Misiones Bs.
9. Otros Bs.
10. Ninguno Bs.

**37. INGR. ¿Cuánto recibió/iste en total como salario, en todos sus/tus trabajos el mes pasado (o último mes que trabajó)?**

**38. SEGSOC. Incluye algún ticket de alimentación / Cestaticket? Seguro?**

- 1 = Instituto Venezolano de Seguros Sociales (IVSS)
- 2 = Instituto de Prevención Social (IPASME, IMPREABOGADO, IPP, etc.)
- 3 = Seguro médico privado
- 4 = No tiene Plan de Seguridad de Atención Médica

**39. INGRFAM. Ingresos del hogar, aproximadamente?**

**40. ALC. El ingreso del hogar...**

- 1. Les alcanza bien, pueden ahorrar
- 2. Les alcanza justo, sin grandes dificultades
- 3. No les alcanza, tienen dificultades
- 4. No les alcanza, tienen grandes dificultades
- 5. No sabe

**41. ECOMAJ. La situación económica de tu hogar ahora esta mejor que hace 10 años, igual o peor? Mucho o poco?**

**42. ECOCOMP. La situación económica de tu hogar es mejor, peor o igual en comparación con los otros hogares en tu sector? Mucho o poco?**

**43. TRANS. Tienes medio de transporte? Como te trasladas?**

**44. COMP. Tienes (acceso a) una computadora?**

### **OCIO.**

**Las próximas preguntas quieren entender mejor que hace(s) en su /tu tiempo libre.**

**45. OCIO. Que haces en una semana normal cuando no esté(s) trabajando? Cuales sitios visitas? Adonde socializas? Plazas/ centros comerciales? Parques? Bares? Fiestas en el barrio?**

**46. COMPX. Con quien te gusta salir o compartir (p.e. un espacio publico, para hablar, comer o tomar algo)?**

**47. PART. En la escala E, con que frecuencia participa(s) en...**

- A. Actividades recreacionales / deporte
- B. Fiestas en el barrio
- C. Una iglesia
- D. Reuniones del Consejo Comunal
- E. Actividades de un centro Juvenil / Estudiantil / Cultural / Voluntario
- F. Un grupo a través de internet
- G. Otro?

- 1. Nunca
- 2. En muy pocas ocasiones

3. Más o menos una vez al mes
4. Más o menos una vez en la semana
5. Casi todos los días

**48. Si A, C, E. Parte de un grupo formal? ¿Como y cuando ingresaste? ¿Donde y cuando se vean?**

**49. ¿Quién son otros miembros con quien te llevas bien?**

**50. Todos necesitamos personas con quien discutir asuntos importantes. Con quien has discutido asuntos personales importantes en los últimos 6 meses? (5 máximo)**

**51. Ves la televisión? Cual? Frecuencia?**

**52. Lees los periódicos? Cual? Frecuencia?**

**53. Radio? Cual? Frecuencia?**

**54. Internet? Frecuencia?**

**55. Hablando en general, ¿dirías que se puede confiar en la mayoría de las personas o que uno nunca es lo suficientemente cuidadoso en el trato con los demás?**

1 Se puede confiar en la mayoría de las personas

2 Uno nunca es lo suficientemente cuidadoso en el trato con los demás

**56. ¿Qué tan ciertas son las siguientes afirmaciones?**

ESCALA D.

1. Para nada cierta
2. Algo Cierta
3. Bastante Cierta
4. Completamente Cierta

a. Me llevo bien con las personas con las que tengo contacto.

b. Considero cercanas a las personas con las que me relaciono.

c. La gente que me rodea se preocupa por mí.

### **BIENESTAR SUJETIVO.**

**Seguimos con algunas preguntas sobre tus / sus percepciones de bienestar.**

**57. RESP. Cuando te sientes respetado? Que es el respeto / poder para ti? Hay veces cuando la gente te falta respeto?**

**58. ¿En qué medida siente que la gente lo trata con respeto?**

**59. ¿En qué medida siente que la gente lo trata injustamente?**

ESCALA C.

1. Nunca
2. Casi nunca

3. A veces
4. Casi siempre
5. Siempre

**60. Imagínese una escalera de diez escalones, donde arriba están las mejores condiciones de vida que pueda imaginar y abajo las peores:**

DIBUJO DE ESCALERA

**Mejores condiciones de vida que pueda imaginar**

**10**

**9**

**8**

**7**

**6**

**5**

**4**

**3**

**2**

**1**

**Peores condiciones de**

**vida que pueda imaginar**

**0**

- A. ¿Quién esta arriba? ¿Quien esta abajo?
- B. ¿Dónde te ubicarías ahora?
- C. ¿Dónde te ubicaste hace cinco años?

**61. ¿Crees que tus oportunidades de mejorar su nivel de vida son hoy día, mejores, iguales o peores que las que tuvieron sus padres?**

**62. ESP. ¿Que son sus / tus expectativas y esperanzas para el futuro?**

### **VIOLENCIA/ VICTIMIZACION**

**Ahora, quiero hacer algunas preguntas sobre la violencia. Primero, pensando en la violencia en tu sector.**

**63. SECTVIO5. En los últimos 5 años, la violencia en [sector] ha aumentado, disminuido, o sigue igual? ¿Mucho o poco? ¿Porque?**

64. SECTVIO10. Y en los últimos 10 años, ha aumentado, disminuido, o sigue igual? ¿Mucho o poco?
65. SECTVIOCOM. Y la violencia en tu sector es ¿Igual, mejor o peor que en otros sectores de Catia? ¿Caracas? ¿El resto del país?
66. SI DICEN QUE HAY VIOLENCIA ¿Que tipos / formas? ¿Con que frecuencia?

Las próximas preguntas tocan sus/tus propias experiencias de violencia.

Estas preguntas pueden ser sensibles, se le recuerde que esta siempre libre de rechazar responder cualquiera pregunta.

67. PEG. En escale E, ¿Con qué frecuencia te pegaban para corregirte cuando niño/a?
68. ¿Con qué le pagaban más frecuentemente cuando era niño/a?
1. Con la mano
  2. Con una chancleta
  3. Con una vara, faja o correa
  4. Con cualquier objeto duro
  5. Con todo lo anterior

69. PEGX. Quien le/te pegó?

#### Victimización

Ahora quiero saber si en alguna ocasión has sido víctima de un delito grave.

70. ASA. ¿Ha(s) sido asaltado (golpeado, empujado o pateado)?
71. DISP. ¿Te / Le han disparado con un arma de fuego?
72. SECU. ¿Te / le secuestraron (llevaron y mantuvieron cautivo contra su voluntad)?
73. ROB. ¿Te / le robaron?
74. VICT. Me puedes contar un poco mas de la (ultima) situación? Que pasó? Cuando y donde pasó? Utilizaron armas (Ejemplo: Botella, vidrio, cuchillo, manopla, líquido, o cuerda, fuego?) Necesitaste atención medica? Cuantos victimarios había?
75. VICTX. ¿Conocías a los victimarios? Me les puede(s) nombrar?
76. MUEVIOX. Alguien que conocías murió por violencia? Me le puede(s) nombrar? Cuando, que pasó?
77. (RPQ Questionnaire)

En algunas ocasiones, la mayoría de nosotros, incluso yo, nos sentimos molestos o hemos hecho cosas que quizás no deberíamos haber hecho. No le/te voy a juzgar por sus/tus respuestas, es importante que trata(s) de ser honesto/a. Recuerda que todas sus respuestas son completamente confidencial y nadie aparte de yo les vera. No pase(s) mucho tiempo pensando las respuestas, sólo señale/a lo primero que haya(s) pensado al escuchar la pregunta.

**¿Con qué frecuencia?**

- A. Has gritado a otros cuando te han irritado -> Quien
- B. Has tenido peleas con otros? (o sea que has pegado, golpeado, empujado, apuñalado o pateado a otros, para mostrar quien era superior o para defenderte?) -> Quien
- C. Has dañado cosas porque te sentías bravo / molesto
- D. Has hablado mal de otra persona?
- E. Has llevado un arma blanca o de fuego al salir por la calle?
- F. Has disparado contra alguien?
- G. Has participado en tiroteos o peleas de bandas?
- H. Has usado la fuerza y/ o una arma para obtener dinero o cosas de otros?
  - 1. Nunca
  - 2. Casi nunca
  - 3. A veces
  - 4. A menudo
  - 5. Siempre

**78. ¿Me puede(s) contar un poco mas de la primera vez que ocurrió? ¿Y la última vez?**

- a. Cuando y donde pasó? Fecha, calle/ fiesta/ casa... Había otra gente presente?
- b. Utilizaron armas (Ejemplo: Botella, vidrio, cuchillo, manopla, líquido, o cuerda, fuego?)
- c. Necesitó atención medica?

**79. En escala E, Con que frecuencia toma(s) alcohol?**

**80. En escala E, Con que frecuencia consume(s) droga?**

**81. Ahora, voy a leer unas oraciones / frases, indícame por favor que tan típico son de ti. 1 equivalía a «extremadamente atípico / inusual de mí» y 5 era «extremadamente característico en mí». Si te molesta rápidamente, sería 5, si no te molesta rápidamente será**

- A. Ante un problema, yo sé cómo controlarme para no pelear
- B. Me molesto rápidamente, pero se me pasa enseguida
- C. Si se me provocan lo suficiente, puedo llegar a golpear a otra persona
- D. Frecuentemente no estoy de acuerdo con la gente
- E. En ocasiones siento que la vida me ha tratado injustamente
- F. Parece que siempre son otros los que consiguen las oportunidades
- G. Cuando la gente no está de acuerdo conmigo, no puedo evitar discutir con ellos
- H. Me pregunto por qué algunas veces me siento tan molesto por algunas cosas
- I. Mis amigos dicen que discuto mucho
- J. Ante un conflicto o desacuerdo serio con mi pareja, puedo explicar mis razones sin enojarme.
- K. Hay gente que me agrede hasta tal punto que llegamos a pegarnos
- L. Algunas veces me molesto mucho sin razón

- M. Tengo dificultades para controlar mi carácter
- N. Cuando me lastiman, creo que lo hicieron a propósito.

**82. Hay personas a cosas que te molestan? Todos tenemos relaciones difíciles. Quien desagradesces? Tienes culebras o enemigos? Quien se comió la luz contigo?**

**83. Ahora le voy a leer otra serie de frases, por favor dígame si está(s) de acuerdo, o en desacuerdo con cada una de ellas.**

ESCALA B.

NO7. Si las autoridades fallan, la gente tiene el derecho a tomar la justicia por su propia cuenta.

NO9. La policía tiene el derecho de detener jóvenes que considere sospechosos por su aspecto físico.

AC6. Una persona tiene derecho a matar para defender a su familia.

AC7. Una persona tiene derecho a matar para defender su casa o propiedad.

AC8. El tener un arma en la casa, hace que una casa sea más segura.

AC9. Portar un arma hace que una persona esté más segura.

AC10. Los niños de la calle deben ser recluidos en instituciones penales.

AC11. A uno le molesta cuando matan a alguien en una pelea que él mismo empezó.

#### **ALTER PREGUNTAS.**

**Viendo la lista de personas que hemos construido.**

**84. Hay alguien importante para ti que ya no esta en la lista?**

**85. Quien de ellas respetas mas? 1 a 5.**

**86. Con quien te comparas? Con quien identificas? Quien te da sentido de pertenencia?**

**87. De quien te pones celosa/o??? Porque?**

**88. En un tiempo de crisis, tendrías alguien para prestarte dinero?**

**89. Quien gane mas que 16,000 bolívares mensuales, o sea 3,500 semanales? Si nadie, conoces alguien que gana mas?**

**90. Si no hay nadie... Conoce(s) alguien...**

**En el [Este / Oeste] de la ciudad?**

**Que tiene educación universitaria?**

**91. Quien tiene una moto? (carro??)**

**92. Con quien discutas política?**

**93. ¿Conoces alguien en el consejo comunal? i.e. hablaron si se encontraron en la calle o el supermercado.**

**Si no hay consejo comunal, ¿conoces alguien que participa en un partido político?**

**94. Quien pertenece a la misma iglesia / profesión / grupo ...?**

**95. Quien has visitado en sus casas en los últimos 3 meses? Y quien te ha visitado a ti en tu casa?**



- 96. A quien puedes recurrir para ... (Tienes alguien a) recurrir para**
- a. Ayudar con un trabajo en casa, por ejemplo llevar muebles, pintar una pared, mudanza
  - b. Arreglar tu moto/carro
  - c. Ordenador
  - d. Cuidar tus niños?
  - e. Ayudar cuando te encuentras enfermo/a, a hacer tus compras o diligencias?

**101. No importa que tan bien dos personas se entienden, hay tiempos cuando no están de acuerdo con decisiones mayores, se fastidian de algo la otra persona hace, o no más tienen desacuerdos o peleas. Con quien tienes desacuerdos, discusiones o peleas, o quien te fastidia a veces?**

**Como resuelves estos conflictos? También usan muchos modos diferentes para tratar de asentar sus diferencias. Voy a leer una lista de algunas cosas que usted y la otra persona podían haber hecho cuando tuvieron una disputa, quisiera que primero me diga para cada una cuántas veces lo hizo en el año pasado. Normalmente todas las personas enfrentan conflictos y existen diferentes maneras de afrontarlos. A continuación le voy a leer formas de manejar conflictos. Quisiera que me indicara con qué frecuencia usted las utiliza.**

- 1 Discutió el asunto calmamente
- 2 Consiguió información para defender su lado de las cosas
- 3 Trató de traer alguien para ayudar a asentar las cosas
- 4 Insultó o mal habló de la otra persona
- 5 Negó a hablar del asunto
- 6 Pisoteo afuera del cuarto o de la casa
- 7 Lloró
- 8 Hizo o dijo algo para fastidiar a la otra persona
- 9 Amenazó a pegar o tirar algo a la otra persona
- 10 Tiró o quebró o pegó o pataleo alguna cosa
- 11 Tiró algo a la otra persona
- 12 Empujó o trató de agarrar a la otra persona
- 13 Dio una palmada a la otra persona 13. Pataleo, mordio o pegó con el puño
- 14 Pegó o trató de pegar con algo
- 15 Golpeó a la otra persona
- 16 Amenazó con un cuchillo o una pistola
- 17 Usó un chuchillo o una pistola

**97. En la escalera de diez escalones que utilizamos antes, donde arriba están las mejores condiciones de vida que pueda imaginar y abajo las peores. Me puedas indicar ¿Dónde ubica las condiciones de vida de cada una de estas personas?**

**98. En una escala de 1 a 5, adonde 1 es nada y 5 es mucho, cuanto confíes en esa persona?**

- 1 – Nada de confianza
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 – Mucha confianza

**96. Para la última pregunta quiero saber las relaciones entre las personas que me nombraste.**

**Esto es para poder evaluar la densidad de tu red.**

- 1= se conocen, pero no se tratan, no se llevan bien
- 0 = no se conocen
- 1= se conocen de cara, pero no es probable que hablan cuando no esté(s)
- 2 = se conocen bien, y es probable que hablan aun cuando no esté(s)

### **ALTER PREGUNTAS.**

#### **1 SEXO**

- 1 = masculino
- 2 = femenino

#### **2 EDAD**

Aproximadamente, cuantos años tiene...

#### **3 TRABAJO**

Cual es el trabajo o mayor fuente de ingresos de ...

#### **4 RESIDENCIA**

Donde vive...

#### **5 RELACION – donde se conocieron? Donde se vean ahora?**

- 1= familia
- 2 = compañero vivienda
- 3 = vecino
- 4 = compañero trabajo
- 5 = amigo escuela
- 6= ocio
- 7= otro

#### **6 DURACION**

Hace cuanto tiempo lo conociste?

#### **7 INTENSIDAD**

Con que frecuencia tienes contacto con esa persona?

- 1. Casi todos los días
- 2. Más o menos una vez en la semana

3. Más o menos una vez al mes
4. En muy pocas ocasiones
5. Nunca

## **8 NIVEL DE VIDA**

**En la escalera de diez escalones que utilizamos antes, donde arriba están las mejores condiciones de vida que pueda imaginar y abajo las peores ¿Dónde ubica las condiciones de vida de...**

## **9 CONFIANZA**

**En una escala de 1 a 5, adonde 1 es nada y 5 es mucho, cuanto confíes en esa persona?**

- 1 – Nada de confianza
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 – Mucho confianza